This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

WIDENER LIBRARY
HX DX2K W

Digitized by Google

Afr 8658.82

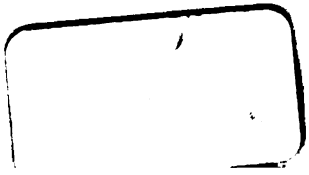
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

FROM THE LIBRARY OF

FRANK EUGENE CHASE

(CLASS OF 1876)

DECEMBER 3, 1920



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Truly Yours
Charles DuVal

Frontispiece to Vol. I.

Digitized by Google

WITH A SHOW

THROUGH

SOUTHERN AFRICA,

AND

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF THE TRANSVAAL WAR.

BY

CHARLES DU VAL,

LATE OF THE CARBINEERS, ATTACHÉ TO THE STAFF OF GARRISON COMMANDANT, AND EDITOR OF THE 'NEWS OF THE CAMP' DURING THE INVESTMENT OF PRETORIA.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

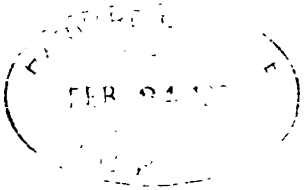
LONDON:
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.
1882.

[*All Rights Reserved.*]

Digitized by Google

Afr 8658.82
~~I. 6199~~

FEB 24 1



F. E. Chase
Boston

395
46-166
1

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

'AFRICA semper aliquid novi offert' was written as long ago as the days of ancient Rome; and that 'Africa always offers to our notice something new' may fairly be echoed by the European of to-day. It is seldom that the pursuit of amusing the public brings its exponents into intimate relations with strife and warfare, nor is it usually attended by experiences of eccentric travel and singular incident; and these facts have alone induced me to place the following pages before the public. I may add that, certainly amongst some circles of society in Great Britain, the most impenetrable haziness appears to exist respecting South Africa—geographically, historically, and socially; another inducement to me to add the very mild rays of light these pages are capable of shedding upon the local atmosphere of fog with which many stay-at-home people seem to be occasionally surrounded. I have personally met, since my return, with individuals who were perfectly astonished I had never seen or heard of some particular relation or friend who, they informed me, was at 'the Cape;' against whom I must perforce have jostled in the street, according to their ideas: and when further conversation disclosed the fact that its subject resided in some out-of-the-way village in the Orange Free State or on the borders of the Transvaal, great was their astonishment to be told that his or her

Digitized by Google

residence was hundreds of miles away from everywhere. This general want of knowledge respecting South Africa is all the more remarkable, as having been the theatre of so many wars, and latterly of two remarkable ones, if it be true that war is the great modern teacher of geography it might fairly have been expected that its characteristics would be more fully and generally understood at home, I have met with many instances to prove the exception to this particular rule.

My personal reminiscences of the late war in the Transvaal bear upon a particular position from which, although the capital and seat of Government, scarcely any news filtered through to the outer world during its investment, owing to the excellence of the Boer scouting, and the charmed circle of their 'waacht' (watch). When at last—the war over—communications did open, public attention was engrossed by events of the settlement, and little seemed to become known of one of the most singular of beleaguerments, replete with incident and remarkable in its peculiarities; which facts must be my excuse for devoting so much space to its description.

If the perusal of these pages will disabuse the minds of individual persons I have met of some peculiarly mixed as well as fixed ideas they entertain, respecting South Africa, and convince them that the Cape Colony is not in the Transvaal; that the Boers are not black and a species of Kaffir; that Zululand is not adjoining Cape Town; that Isandhwlana had no connection with Laing's Nek; that Joubert is not responsible for the death of the Prince Imperial; and that Lord Chelmsford is in no way to blame for the reverse at Majuba Hill—I shall feel I have not written in vain.

THE AUTHOR.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

ON THE ROAD TO SOUTH AFRICA—SOUTHAMPTON WATER—PLYMOUTH SOUND—THE BAY OF BISCAY—MADEIRA - 1

CHAPTER II.

OFF MADEIRA—FUNCHAL AND ITS ENVIRONS—BAZAAR ON BOARD—ANCHOR UP - - - - 11

CHAPTER III.

THE WATERY WASTE—THE CANARY ISLANDS—OUR AMUSEMENTS—CROSSING THE LINE—ST. HELENA—STAR-GAZING—TABLE BAY - - - - - 22

CHAPTER IV.

CAPE TOWN, FROM SEA AND SHORE—A GLIMPSE OF ITS HISTORY, ITS BUILDINGS, HOTELS, AND MALAYS - - - 36

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR IN CAPE TOWN—PICNICS AND AL FRESCO DINING—AN INTERVIEW WITH CETCHWAYO—SUBURBAN SCENERY—A FAREWELL PERFORMANCE - - 46

CHAPTER VI.

STARTING FOR THE DIAMOND FIELDS—THE HEX RIVER VALLEY—BEAUFORT WEST—COACH TRAVELLING—MIRAGE—CROSSING THE ORANGE RIVER—DU TOITS PAN SIGHTED—ARRIVAL AT KIMBERLEY - - - - - 56

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

THE DIAMOND FIELDS—THE STORY OF THEIR DISCOVERY—HISTORICAL RETROSPECT—SOCIAL LIFE—A DAY IN KIMBERLEY 68

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIAMOND FIELDS (CONTINUED) — KIMBERLEY MINE — BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS — AMUSEMENTS — WITH THE 'SHOW'—A VISIT TO THE GAOL—ILLICIT DIAMOND BUYING—THE START FOR THE ORANGE FREE STATE - - 82

CHAPTER IX.

BOSHOF—ON THE 'TREKK'—TRAVELLING EXPERIENCES IN THE FREE STATE—CAMPING OUT—CROSSING THE MODDER RIVER—BULLOCK WAGGON TRANSIT—BLOEMFONTEIN - - 99

CHAPTER X.

ON THE 'TREKK'—MORE TRAVELLING ENJOYMENTS—FAURESMITH — JAGERSFONTEIN — PHILLIPOLIS — COLESBERG — HANOVER—SPRINGBOK SHOOTING—MIDDLESBURG—ECONOMISING TIME - - - - - 110

CHAPTER XI.

A FRIEND IN NEED—OSTRICH-FARMING—CRADOCK—A COLONIAL RACE MEETING—THE GREAT FISH RIVER—A NIGHT MARCH—MIDDLEBURG AGAIN — HAILSTORMS — RICHMOND — COAST SCENES—VICTORIA TO BEAUFORT WEST - - 120

CHAPTER XII.

MURRAYSBURG—A NIGHT ON THE SNEUBERG—A MOUNTAIN ROAD—GRAAFF REINNETT—PORT ELIZABETH—A WHITE KAFFIR—AN IRISH MALAY—HOMEWARD BOUND—THE EX-EMPRESS OF THE FRENCH—PORT ELIZABETHAN INCIDENTS—A COLONIAL REGATTA—UITENHAGE—A SINGULAR VIOLINIST - - 133

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

PAGE

THROUGH THE MIDLAND PROVINCE—PEARSTON—AN EQUINE SUICIDE—SOMERSET EAST—COOKHOUSE DRIFT—BEDFORD—A NEWSPAPER PROPRIETOR—AN AMATEUR SNAKE-CHARMER—ADELAIDE—FORT BEAUFORT—HORSE TRADING—ALICE—LOVEDALE—ITS KAFFIR INSTITUTION—FORT BROWN—GRAHAMSTOWN—ITS PECULIARITIES—DEATH OF 'GLADSTONE'—PORT ALFRED—THE KOWIE—HOW I WENT TO 'SMILING SALEM' - 147

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE ROAD—FISH RIVER—BREAKFAST VLEY—KING WILLIAMSTOWN—A V.C. PRESENTATION—EAST LONDON—CATHCART—QUEENSTOWN—AMATEUR WHEELWRIGHTS—TARKASTADT—A BAR-ROOM SCENE—LIVELY EDITING—CRADOCK AGAIN—MARAISBURG—STEYNSBURG—A PLEASANT JOURNEY—BURGHERSDORP—AFRICAN CRICKET—DORDRECHT—A TROPICAL HIBERNIAN—AN UNPLEASANT JOURNEY—JAMESTOWN—A GERMAN HOST—ALIWAL NORTH—WITH THE CAPE MOUNTED RIFLES—BREAKING CAMP—THE FREE STATE AGAIN—ROUXVILLE—MY LICENSE—SMITHFIELD—REDDERSBURG—A MODEL PRISON - - - - - - 168

CHAPTER XV.

BLOEMFONTEIN ONCE MORE—A FRACAS—BRANDFORD—WINBURG—JOKES—SENEKAL—A MODEL ASSEMBLY ROOM—CURIOUS KOPJE—BETHLEHEM—A QUEER DOCTOR—A MORNING CALL FROM THE ZULUS—A POLITICAL BLACKSMITH: HIS OPINIONS—HARRISMITH—A CURIOUS ROBBERY—DARK EXPERIENCES—IRISH NATIONALITY—THE TRONK—CANEM FIDELIS—CROSSING THE DRAKENSBERG—FIRST VIEW OF NATAL - - - - - - 188

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAND OF FAIR NATAL—A GLIMPSE OF ITS HISTORY—FROM THE DRAKENSBERG TO THE SEA—PORT NATAL—DURBAN - 201

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII.

PAGE

THE LAND OF FAIR NATAL—VERULAM—KAFFIR TRADING—THE COAST—THUNDERSTORMS—MARITZBURG - - - 219

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE ROAD TO THE TRANSVAAL—A MOONLIGHT RIDE—SOUTH AFRICAN TRAVEL—A PLEASANT LANDLADY—CROSSING THE KLIP RIVER—LADYSMITH—A NIGHT ON THE VELDT—NEWCASTLE - - - - - - 228

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHAPTER OF TRANSVAAL TRAVEL—CROSSING THE BUFFALO—A ZULU WAR CELEBRITY—A HORSE HUNT—WAKKERSTROOM—AN OLD COLONIST'S TALE - - - - 240

CHAPTER XX.

A CHAPTER OF TRANSVAAL TRAVEL — THE SAND SPRUIT — MYSTERIOUS STRANGERS—MORE ACCIDENTS—CROSSING THE VAAL RIVER—STANDERTON—A HAILSTORM—AN EPISODE—CHASED BY ZULU CONSTABLES—ARRIVAL AT PRETORIA - 253

CHAPTER XXI.

PRETORIA—A WORD OR TWO ON THE TRANSVAAL—FIRST INTERVIEW WITH SIR OWEN LANYON—BOER SCARES—A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING—DEFENSIVE ORGANIZATIONS AND DYNAMITE—D'ARCY'S HORSE—RUMOURS OF WARS—'WITH THE SHOW' AT THE CAMP—ENTR'ACTE INTELLIGENCE—PIQUET DUTY—MY FIRST PATROL - - - - 264

Digitized by Google

A SHOW THROUGH SOUTHERN AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE ROAD TO SOUTH AFRICA—SOUTHAMPTON WATER—PLYMOUTH SOUND—THE BAY OF BISCAY—MADEIRA.

'Adieu, adieu, my native shore
Fades o'er the waters blue.'

It is pleasant there is at least somebody, if only a poet, who can thus bid farewell to the home of his birth; but had the writer of the above lines enjoyed the companionship of my fellow-voyagers in the Union Company's good ship *Nubian*, when leaving Southampton, he would have seen but little blue water to inspire his poetical ideas as he took a last retrospective gaze at 'Old England on our lee.' A blinding shower of snow, impelled by a cutting nor'-east wind whose every blast searched through the marrow, in spite of outer covering of frieze ulster and tiger-skin rug, was too stern a reminder of the reality of existence to permit the ideal to take possession of the mind's eye, as we steamed away on the road to South Africa.

A gleam of delusive sunshine broke for a few moments, as though a smile of mockery cast in derision by the American weather prophet in the Polar regions,

Digitized by Google

who was evidently forwarding in cold haste the extra sleet, snow, and 'wintry wind' which the denizens of the Arctic zone could most easily spare for others' uses.

Taking advantage, however, of the momentary break in the snowstorm, I looked to the left to discover, if possible, the ruins of Netley Abbey; and pacing the deck to and fro, I recalled the lines of Ingoldsby wherein he says:

'I saw thee, Netley, as the sun
Beneath the western wave
Was sinking slow, and a golden glow
To thy roofless towers he gave.'

An honest tar, actuated, I sadly fear, by the wish which is said to be father of the thought, pointed out the ruins for my edification; but alas and alack, my landsman's eyes were all too dull to pierce the low-lying haze that seemed, as it were, to form a winding-sheet for the long headland running out to the sea. This tar, enveloped in sea-boots, oilskin coat, and 'sou'-wester,' had but an hour before, attired in full uniform of blue, been negotiating a small matter of a bunch of violets with a young lady of Southampton, who had evidently come to the dock to say farewell. Why men select the profession of a sailor with all its attendant hardships, partings, long absence, dangers, and deprivations, is a problem it will take a much clearer head than mine to work out to a successful solution.

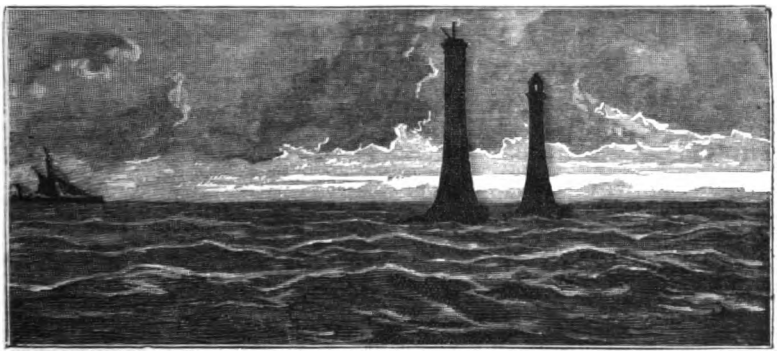
While meditating thus, our ship steamed on, and we arrived in due course at Plymouth Sound, where, after a delay of four hours beyond the appointed time, the mail-tender arrived, and having taken on board the various communications addressed to our cousins in South Africa, the anchor weighed, the screw revolved,

Digitized by Google

and we bid good-bye to that little isle upon whose dominion the orb of day is said never to set.

Have you ever seen the Eddystone Lighthouse standing out alone and solitary, miles and miles away from land, a guardian of the deep, keeping watch and ward, warning the mariner of sunken rock and hidden reef, its glittering beacon like the great eye of England, greeting the coming, speeding the parting guest?

If you have not and possess a train of fancies, its utter isolation, the wild storms that dash over it, the light it sheds rippling on the rising and falling waves, together



The Old and New Eddystone Lighthouses.

with the fact of people residing for months at a time upon it, will, when your opportunity offers, afford ample food for reflection, and the awakening of hidden thought.

Throb! throb! throb! splash! splash! splash! engine and screw in joint co-partnership speed along the gallant ship—miles which now we count by units will soon increase to tens, the tens to hundreds, the hundreds to thousands before our course is finished, our voyage completed.

A fine vessel, a good commander, a splendid crew, a liberal table, stewards and serving men all attention.

Digitized by Google

Why am I not happy? Can it be that coming events are casting a darkened shadow over my gastric region? Is it that Biscay Bay of evil renown is the fly in the treacle of my present hour? Sea-sickness, avaunt? Ocean, thou mighty monster, I defy thee!

Steam is an excellent thing in its way. It sends the iron-horse careering along at sixty miles an hour; it drives the stately ship through the waves at fourteen to eighteen knots; the spindles of the manufactory fly in unison at its command; the sheets of the newspaper roll off victoriously 20,000 per sixty minutes. It is useful in several ways, I admit; but when it wakens you in your berth aboard ship, by bursting the hot-air pipe in your cabin, producing the sensation of semi-suffocation, allied to compressed Turkish Bath, I hold that steam is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare. Such, however, was my second night's experience, and until the main supply tap was turned off I enjoyed the privilege of a close study of the more intimate effects of steam upon the human subject. But yet another misery!—well did you say, old Eccles, 'How much more sharper than a serpent's folds it is, to have a toothless child'—the steam is turned off, and quietude once more obtains, when lo! the early morning air (four o'clock) is laden with the gum-distracted lamentations of a young gentleman of very tender years engaged upon a somewhat necessary, if likewise disagreeable, operation of cutting his teeth. He is temporarily quiet. I secure the opportunity to seek repose once more. I begin to dream, the throb of the engine suggests all sorts of things to my steam-child disordered imagination —'Now go careful,' 'Mind the rock, sir,' 'Hunkey Dorum,' and a thousand and one equally fanciful sayings flit through my dreaming brain, when suddenly the

Digitized by Google

squall rises again, and routed sleep completes the evacuation of my wearied brain.

Day dawns; the sun in morning wrapper of varied hues rises in crimsoned streaks on the horizon, and we are informed that we are rapidly approaching that portion of the voyage most dreaded by persons whose digestive organs are not in accord with the 'motion of the ocean;' in fact, in an hour's time we shall be in the Bay of Biscay. It may be that the adage 'Give a dog a bad name,' etc., has been applied to this portion of the watery hemisphere, as, with the exception of a somewhat pronounced swell, there was little evidence of that evil repute which has rendered 'the Bay' a *bête noire* to the nervous sea-traveller. So comparatively calm was the ocean as to call forth at the breakfast-table the congratulations of the captain on seeing the guests at his board so well represented. An unlooked-for event happened the second day of crossing the Bay of Biscay, in the sudden death of one of the fore-cabin passengers; and the next day being Sunday, instead of the usual morning service of the Church of England being performed, the burial service of the same ritual was read, and the remains of the deceased man committed to the deep.

A funeral at sea—clang! clang! clang! slowly and solemnly rings out the bell, its sound answered by the splash of the waters as the good ship moves along, responsive to her screw and sail, for she carries a fair amount of canvas, steamer though she be; all the officers and crew in full uniform are mustered for'ad, and the service for the dead is duly spoken by the captain, as the bearers carry the body to the vessel's side. There, enwrapt in the Union Jack, the flag which has floated triumphantly over countless deeds of daring

Digitized by Google

and valour, performed by his countrymen in every sea and every clime, lie the mortal remains of one who but an hour before was talking wildly of vengeance on the Zulus of South Africa, who it appears he held responsible for the death of a brother in the late war. The text 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,' was never more fully exemplified than now. At the words 'Commit this body to the deep,' the remains are slipped overboard from the stretcher, and, heavily weighted with shot, sink to rise no more—'Without a grave, uncoffined, and unknown.'

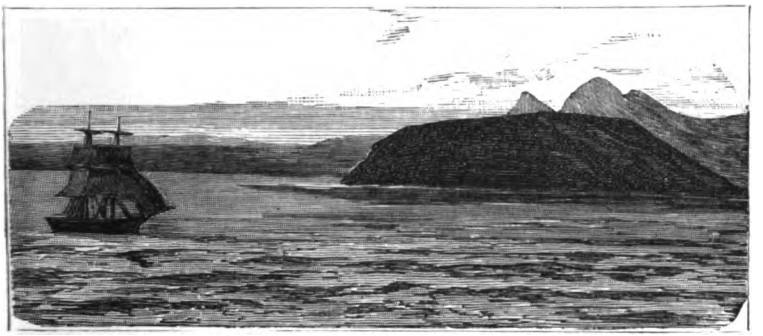
À propos of this unpleasant event a story went the rounds of crew and passengers that a shark had been seen following the vessel for a day or two previous; but as the rumour originated amongst the former, and as Jack is universally a superstitious animal, and as we heard nothing about it until after this occurrence, I confess I allied myself with the sceptics, who severely doubted the truth of the story, though it gained credence with many from its blood-curdling sentiment. There is no doubt the public do most thoroughly enjoy a ghoul-like dish, well-seasoned with horrors.

Sunday evening brought church service, the captain officiating, assisted by the ship's surgeon, a Scottish musical enthusiasist, as organist. The bell calling the people to church out on the bosom of the broad Atlantic was so full of home suggestions, that many passengers, probably those who had never before left their kindred, friends, and associations, felt a strong emotion rising in their hearts; and as the brazen call rang out in purest tones, it awakened vivid recollections of many a house of prayer in the cosy vales of England, the green slopes of Ireland, the heather-clad hills of Scotland, or the sun-dried plains of South Africa, where they were

Digitized by Google

wont to assemble on the seventh day 'to keep it holy.'

On Wednesday, the 26th November, we sighted the island of Madeira, famed for good climate and indifferent wine. In approaching it we passed two smaller islands, which may be fairly described as satellites, namely, Porto Santo and the Desertas, the latter looking like a huge turtle squatted on the water. As we steamed up more immediately near to Madeira we discovered the upper portions of the island were heavily enveloped in mist, its mountain-peaks struggling through



Porto Santo and Desertas (Madeira Group).

the clouds, which broke and rent as the boisterous wind drove them along before it. A small rocky promontory first met the eye, surmounted by sharp points and lying low in the immediate foreground, a picturesque object. Approaching the shore the breeze freshened considerably, so much so that all idea of landing passengers or taking mails until the sea calmed down had to be abandoned. We consequently rolled about in Funchal Bay, and thinking how nice the town looked from the ship, wished most heartily for the opportunity of judging whether the ship looked equally as well from the town.

Digitized by Google

Madeira belongs to Portugal, and one of the strongest sentiments that exhibits itself in the good people of that nation appears to be the desire to follow the example of their great grandsires to the very letter, and whose motto is or should be 'Status quo.' As a natural consequence there is no attempt at anything like harbour accommodation—a breakwater is not thought of—and you can scarcely call it a pier, the shelf of wall that does duty for a landing-place. We felt the want of a harbour on this occasion sadly, and we thought with feelings of the deepest reverence on Holyhead, Kingstown, and a few other places where the triumph of engineering man has converted the comparatively open sea into a wall-bound dock.

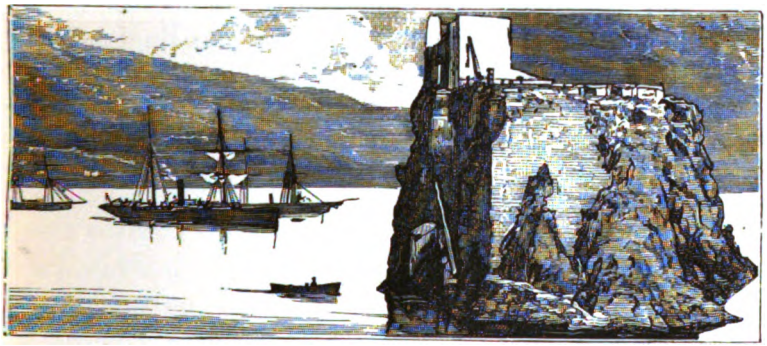
While we are engaged in singing, 'Thou art so near, and yet so far,' to the town of Funchal, which by the way is the chief town of the island, let us try, as well as the rolling waves and pitching vessel will permit, to take a word-picture of the scene before us. There lies the town, built almost entirely of white houses extending up from the shore, and scattered away in patches, until the fringe breaks, and the habitations stand here, there and everywhere up the mountain-sides, like outposts on duty, keeping a bright look-out for the main body below. The background is extremely beautiful, as mountains rising from the water's edge are broken into clefts and fissures, and mottled with coloured patches of red, green, or grey, the whole presenting a charming picture, the arrangement of which has lain with the artist Nature, and well she has completed her work. With a good glass small objects are discernible, and one of the most picturesque effects is that of an old fort standing to the left, on the Loo Rock, the surrounding sea forming a natural moat, which no doubt rendered it

Digitized by Google

a somewhat impregnable fortress in the days of long ago.

It is futile, however, to devote much attention to a description of the scene, as a rising wind, heavy sea, and coming squalls are not assistants to a graphic exposition by pen or pencil, and such are the agreeable adjuncts of Funchal Bay.

It is interesting to watch the movements of a brigantine and schooner doing their level best to get away to the open sea in the teeth of half a gale of wind blowing right inshore. Tack after tack, now to the



Loo Rock, Funchal, Madeira.

right, now to the left, goes the brigantine, followed closely by the schooner, who evidently thinks example better than precept, now pinnacled high upon the rising billows, now half-mast down in the trough of the sea, the waves dashing in foam over her bows, every rise showing her brown painted side, intersected by a thin streak of white, her sails wet with spray, glittering brilliantly in the flashes of sun that occasionally break through the angry clouds above. The sea, as we get more directly opposite the town, becomes a paler green, heavy clouds darken the background and envelope the mountain. It is decided that we must put out to sea and run at half-

Digitized by Google

speed against the wind to ride the gale out, which desideratum is expected by the knowing ones in less than twenty-four hours' time, when it is proposed to return to Madeira, and effect a landing, more moderate wind and calmer weather permitting. This decision must have been particularly agreeable to one of our passengers who was quietly viewing his house, garden, and possibly his 'cousins and his aunts' on shore, with the prospects of renewing their acquaintance, a matter for future hope. We also had a couple of voyagers whose nervous dispositions were so markedly exhibited that they declared if the opportunity did offer of landing, they would embrace it, and return to England by next steamer homeward bound, and they most religiously kept their word as far as the landing was concerned.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

OFF MADEIRA—FUNCHAL AND ITS ENVIRONS—BAZAAR ON BOARD—ANCHOR UP.

'THE tables full! Here is a place reserved,' was the exclamation and reply at the banquet where Macbeth was interviewed by the obliging spirit of the defunct Banquo. Had the Thane of Fife and Cawdor dropped in at our dinner table off Madeira, he would have found several places reserved, but few occupied; indeed, it would seem as though the majority of our passengers had suddenly become vegetarians, or thought it wise to propitiate heaven by a thorough and complete fast.

Do you know what a fiddle is? Why, of course, a violin! Ah, yes, that is all very well on land, but a fiddle at dinner on board ship is a very different instrument, and displays a decided appreciation of harmony by preventing that enjoyable work becoming a medley of confusion. From the 'overture' of *soup*, through the 'introduction' of *entree*, the 'grand Morceau' of *remove*, the 'variations' of *releves*, *pastries*, and *dessert*, to the 'finale' of *coffee* and *tooth-picks*, the 'fiddle' plays an important part.

It is possible that many whose experiences of sea travelling have been limited to a cross channel run from Holyhead to Kingstown, or Dover to Calais, may not be personally acquainted with the manifold virtues of

Digitized by Google

this estimable instrument. It consists of a series of wooden frames, affixed to the dining tables, and constructed to hold plate, teacup, tumbler, and wineglass, as it is conceded that it is healthier and better to swallow your soup, to drink your tea, and sip your wine, than to have the first precipitated into your shirt front, the second cataracted over your knees, or the last distributed generally over your wearing apparel, all of which pleasing results would be rendered extremely probable in a lively sea, were it not for the safeguard afforded by the fiddle. Can you, therefore, wonder at the space I have taken up to sing the praises of this most necessary accompaniment to a satisfactory dinner on the mighty ocean's rollers?

After a particularly bad night, we returned to Madeira and cast anchor in the Bay of Funchal, close in to the town of that name. Going on deck I found a couple of boats alongside full of the amphibious youth of Funchal, who ever and anon would dive, and with marvellous celerity, almost invariably bring up any coins which our more sportively inclined voyagers threw into the water.

The frog is generally admitted to be a fairly good swimmer, the seal is not too bad, the porpoise manages to keep an end up in the watery element, but the Portuguese boy of Madeira combines the ability of the trio in his reptile and fish-like propensities, to which he has superadded that virtue said to be concentrated in lawyers and money lenders, namely—a just appreciation of the root of all evil and as much as ever he can get of it.

Government and Customs officers come off to our vessel to interrogate us, receive mails, etc. The officials representing the Portuguese nation, sit enveloped in boat cloaks and cowls, looking like a couple of monks

Digitized by Google

of the olden time; that illusion is, however, soon dispelled as they cheerily interchange greetings in well spoken English with our worthy commander, bobbing about at the ship's side the while for a surging swell, a consequent of the previous night's gale is the order of the morning in Madeira waters.

By the time the examination is concluded, a crowd of boats surround the ship, each manned by Portuguese sailors, sinewy of arm and bronzed of visage. The 'tar' is much the same thing 'all the world around,' whether you call him Jack at Portsmouth, Jean at Calais, or Juan at Madeira. The family resemblance of followers of the sea still obtains, and clime, creed, or country cannot obliterate it. His honesty, however, though much praised at sea, is somewhat corrupted in harbour, the more so, I fear, at ports of call, where he exhibits in the capacity of waterman only, and hugs the shore in preference to the broader region of the great ocean's expanse. We found this to be the case on returning to the ship, as the boatmen refused to take us back for less than double the price agreed upon, which extortion brought forward some strong adjectives anent the honesty of the Madeira boatmen from several incensed 'Arrys,' to whose ears the music of Bow Bells alone is sweet.

These mariners of Funchal, however, exhibit no inferiority of physique to their confraternity elsewhere; in fact, they may be said to rather present a superiority in many points where agility and suppleness are required.

'Who is for the shore?' becomes at once a debateable question, receiving not a few affirmatives from our more enterprising passengers who are quite willing to risk a probable ducking in landing, to leaving untrodden the

Digitized by Google

verdant slopes of the timber island, for such is the origin of its name—Madeira.

A strong pull, and a pull all together, is necessary to bring our high prowed boat through the swelling sea to the apology for a quay, which lies hidden behind the Loo Fort; and a considerable amount of athletic and judicious nerve is requisite to effect a landing when it is reached.

Several of our party had the luxury of a sea bath up to the arm-pits, and anathemas both loud and deep, and pronounced with strong London accent, were hurled at Madeira, its arrangements in general, and the Portuguese in particular. The first objects that attracted attention after landing were the bullock sleighs, wheeled vehicles being apparently unknown in this region, and indeed owing to its conformation and style of paving a hackney coach would be as much out of place there as a bicycle on an iceberg, or a codfish on an asphalte pavement. The streets, more or less hilly, are paved with sharp pieces of stone, through the interstices the grasses grow without let or hindrance, and over which the runners of the sleighs glide with a fairly easy motion, to a most musical accompaniment of tinkling ox bells, each beast carrying one of these 'Tintinabulatory appendages' hung round his neck. Another mode of conveyance is the slung hammock attached 'fore and aft' to a pole, borne on the shoulders of two men, with a third as relief, an easy and pleasant method of compassing distance for the occupant, but scarcely so for the bearers.

Preferring shanks's mare to the slow but sure movements of the ox-sleigh, our party were accompanied by a couple of guides through the narrow and labyrinthine streets of Madeira's capital. How is it these

Digitized by Google

guides crop up wherever there is anything to be seen, shown, or exhibited? Marvellously alike they all appear to be, and automatic to a degree in their unvaried detail, imperturbable in manner, impenetrable as to humour, except the stock allowance they let off for the benefit of the 'conducted party,' and sublimely indifferent to most things but the inevitable 'Backsheesh' which forms the 'Finis' to their books of information.

Two of these parasitical plants had affixed their octopus-like arms around our party the moment we landed, and clung on with a sucker-like power it was impossible to shake off; a word in their favour, however, they carried baskets, chairs, fruit, drank all the wine left in the glasses and bottles, dregs inclusive, and accepted their gratuities without growling, or regarding the donor as though they had received a mortal injury at his hand.

Fruits and flowers, and aroma and perfume exhaled on every side; and this is winter we are told. It is difficult to credit the statement with the warm sun rendering even moderate walking a work of serious import to our colder constitutions. Every second person met carrying an umbrella or sun-shade adds to our difficulty, but when at length reason bids our acceptance of the fact, and we reflect upon the winter left behind us—the slush, the snow, the sleet, the cutting east wind, the northern blast, the rain, the mud, the fog, and the general discomfort of the British Kingdom during that season—it does much to reconcile our feelings to temporary exile, and we agree that they certainly have the advantage of us in Madeira in the matter of November weather arrangements.

The houses of Funchal are built substantially—thick walls, and greyish-brown tiled roofs; the reason, I

Digitized by Google

presume, of the extra thick walls to buildings in warm climates is on the same principle as the Irishman's frieze coat, which he said kept the heat out in the summer and the cold out in the winter. All the windows of the better class houses have Venetian shutters; these, however, as the sun was not excessive to the native born, were mostly thrown open, and we were occasionally favoured with a glance from some of the 'weaker vessels,' whom I suppose in gallantry it is necessary to call the 'fairer' sex; though a strict sense of the truth would suggest that they were exceedingly brown and decidedly unprepossessing. Having visited the Post Office, a primitive building, loose boards on the stairs, absence of whitewash visible, and paint conspicuous by its absence, we took a look at the Cathedral. This building, one of the most important in the town, is chiefly composed of large blocks of red and grey stone, and contains some magnificent altars and stations of the cross. The Roman Catholic religion is *per se* in Madeira, an absolute power, and there can be but few persons of other denominations to dispute its sway. But one step brings us from the place where sins are most forgiven to that where punishments are meted out, namely, the town prison. At the door a Portuguese soldier, clad in a uniform of black or dark green, somewhat resembling an English Rifleman or one of the Royal Irish Constabulary, stands, acting the part of Cerberus. If the rest of the Portuguese army resemble the few specimens which garrison Madeira, they are not calculated (if appearances mean anything) to strike terror into the hearts of their opponents, as a more miserable looking, shambling, unsoldierlike set I have seldom seen, except in a batch of militia recruits at their second parade. The interior of the prison to which we were

Digitized by Google

immediately admitted by the turnkey, without a word of question, was much on a par with the sentry outside; and the prisoners, who appeared to have nothing to work at, were penned in two rooms, one allotted to males, the other to females. They swarmed to the barred doors on the advent of strangers, and smiled, nodded, and laughed agreeably. Some of the ladies apparently seemed desirous to create a favourable impression on the susceptible hearts of our bachelor friends, and shot quite killing glances through the iron grate at the more prepossessing members of our band. We went up two flights of stairs, but as we lost the perfume of the tropical fruits and flowers the higher we ascended, receiving therefor a substitute which our nasal organs refused to appreciate, we thought it better to give the aforesaid organs an opportunity of inhaling the less mixed atmosphere outside. I may add, that having had ten minutes' experience of the prison at Funchal, if stern and relentless fate should for any future time reserve Madeira as my dwelling-place, while such sojourn obtains I shall be specially careful to conform to the laws of the place, as I have little desire to re-make the acquaintance of that abode whose motto should be, 'Cease to do evil, and learn to do well.'

After running the gauntlet of numerous beggars, of which there are in Funchal as many specimens of the maimed, the halt, and the blind as would cause the heart of a physiologist to throb with responsive emotion, we sought the market-place. Whether it was that the winter season was adverse to the fruit crop, or whether the market resources had been specially strained, I cannot say; but the fact was patent to all that the fruit market as a place wherein to buy

Digitized by Google

fruit was a fraud. There were some corpulent melons, a few half-ripe bananas, and some yellow oranges whose golden lustre paled by contrast with the more yellow cheeks of the ancient basket-women who vended them. These degenerate descendants of Mother Eve tempted our modern Adams in vain with the forbidding if not forbidden fruit. It is but fair to add that although the vines have latterly been a failure, and the produce of Madeira wines has consequently somewhat decayed, the island produces in due season tropical fruits in great abundance, and on our return to the steamer we found the luncheon-table quite rich in a display of mangoes, bananas, melons, tomatoes, custard apples, etc., a change of diet much appreciated after a week out.

It is a charming island, this Madeira, and it is no wonder that persons suffering from, or threatened with, chest complaints visit it as a health-resort. Thirty-five miles by twelve of beautiful scenery, lofty mountains, the Pico Ruivo standing over 6,000 feet above the sea-level; remarkable valleys, amongst which 'the Cumal,' cleft by the hand of Nature, sinks 2,000 feet deep; mountain and valley abounding in tropical fruits, plants, and flowers of every scent, hue and variety; girt around by massive walls of cliff; the whole set in a glittering ocean where storms are few, and winds seldom prevail; the God of day shining down upon the entire scene with a resplendent power, and shedding over all that golden hue which adds a burnish to the richness of the picture.

Charming as Madeira is, and delightful as the sensation of having something under foot more reliable than a plank or two may be, like all things in this mutable

Digitized by Google

Returning to the Steamer, Funchal Bay, Madeira.

Digitized by Google

world, our visit must have an end, so receiving the benediction of our guides, and several *buono Señores*, in response for certain medallion portraits of Her Britannic Majesty, we returned to our good ship lying anchored in the bay. On our arrival we found the quarter-deck converted into a bazaar, where a brisk business was being conducted by some enterprising tradesmen in basket-work, wicker-chairs, silk knitted shawls, work-boxes, Zodiac rings, photos of the island, etc.; in point of fact, no opportunity appeared to be lost of earning an honest penny. There was this peculiarity observable, that the prices asked were of such an amount as to admit of a very considerable reduction in closing the bargain; and although I scorn to impugn the rectitude of these insular vendors of home manufactures, I personally succeeded in reducing the price of several articles I purchased as souvenirs, to exactly one-half of the original price asked, and venture to throw out the suggestion to visitors to Funchal Bay, that as 'plain figures on all goods' is not in vogue there, they need not flood the market with British gold, when silver will do as well. This reminds me that these traders, some of whom bear a strongly-marked nasal resemblance to the lost tribes of Israel, will gladly exchange silver for gold; and on inquiring the cause, I discovered that the English gold sovereign would fetch 22s. silver coinage of Portugal, which explained the unknown quantity as exemplified in Funchal practice.

The departure-bell rings, and all is hurry-skurry to the ship's side; over which baskets of fruit, knick-knacks, and damageable articles are lowered to the boats alongside, while less delicate items, such as wicker-work tables and chairs, go by the board without much

Digitized by Google

hesitation, to take their chance of rescue from a watery home by the look-outs below. There is a noisy racking sound as the donkey-engine weighs our anchor, and away we steam; and as we leave the bay, a gentle shower of rain, like the tears of farewell, is wafted down from the mountain-slopes, and when we add distance to lend its enchantment to the view, an exquisitely beautiful rainbow exhibits itself, which, like the succeeding smile of hope, seems to be glowing with good wishes to cheer us on our way.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

THE WATERY WASTE—THE CANARY ISLANDS—OUR AMUSEMENTS—CROSSING THE LINE—ST. HELENA—STAR-GAZING—TABLE BAY.

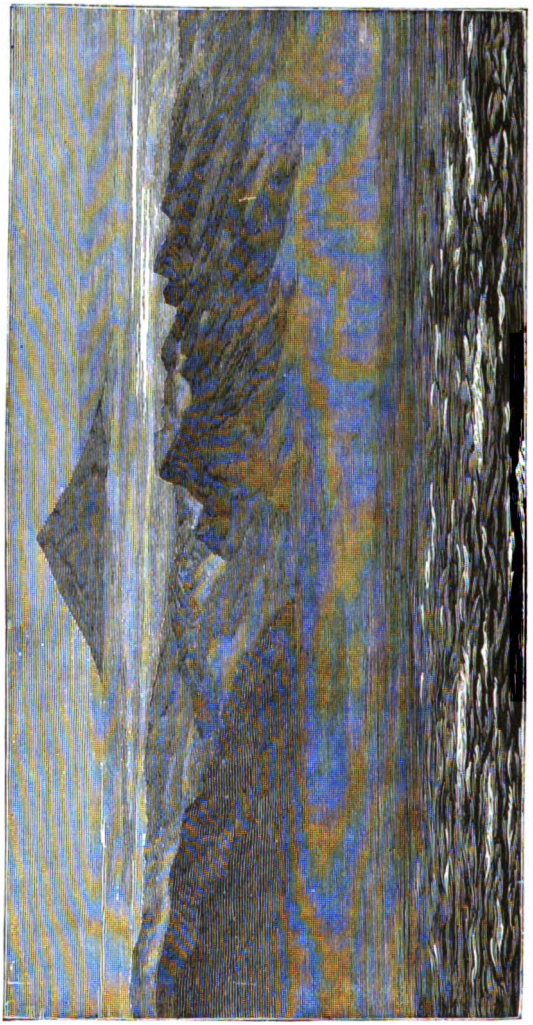
WATER! water everywhere! there is nothing impresses the immensity of the world we inhabit upon the mind so much as a long sea voyage. As far as the eye can reach, for days and days together, nothing is seen to break the unvaried monotony of sea and sky; not even a passing vessel dipping gradually down out of sight, first her hull vanishing, followed in turn by mainsail, topsail, and royals, until at last the little pennant fluttering at the highest point of her slender mast is absorbed in the far-off distance. Hour after hour you may gaze around without such a vision passing before you; and when the multitude of craft of all countries making their way over the ocean is considered, it is truly astonishing how few are seen by voyagers at sea.

The Canaries! land ho! on the port quarter!—the first glimpse of the Canaries. Ladies, fair ladies, to whom the word canary will at once suggest a dear little feathered pet whose throat is ever ready to emit sweet sounds, or swallow sweet sugar at your will, had you caught sight with me of the Canaries of the South Atlantic, you would have seen little to remind you of

Digitized by Google

your song-bird and its lay. A giant mountain-top, clad in whitest snow, rearing its pointed head far above the clouds which mantle-like encircled its base, looking like the King of Winter seated upon his throne, his sceptre a glacier, his courier an avalanche. Such is the Peak of Teneriffe, rising like a huge sugar-loaf 12,000 feet above the sea, and on its topmost point, where now the snow lies white, was once a crater, belching fire and smoke, whose fiery throes have rent a cavity more than a mile in width, and whose depth it would be difficult to tell. Teneriffe, or as the Spaniards call it, Tenerifa, the chief of the Canary Islands, is, as may be supposed from the previous sentence, of volcanic origin; in fact a ridge of mountains of that character traverse the island, many of which attain enormous altitudes, though all fail to reach that of the magnificent Peak. It is a rocky coast, hard and inaccessible; and if it at all resembles one of its fellow islands which are skirted at a distance of a couple of miles, it must be a disagreeable place whereon to select a site for your suburban villa or country house, though it would doubtless prove the place of places for an anchorite's abode, or a misanthrope to whom the world had become 'flat and unprofitable.' This is not a very distinctive description of the island, as its soil is fertility itself, resulting in no less than two, and often three, harvests in the year. Fancy how the hearts of our British farmers would rejoice at the thrice-reaped sheaves of golden grain, and how manfully Pat would go to work to dig up for the third time the 'mealy potatoes' which are known to be 'an Irishman's joy.' These islands possess a history, too, and were known of old as the Fortunate Isles, though why so called history sayeth not. It is enough to know that so long back as

Digitized by Google



The Peak of Teneriffe, Canary Islands.

Digitized by Google

1330 a Spanish or French vessel was driven ashore upon them, and that some seventy years later on they became a Spanish possession, and have remained so ever since, more's the pity.

In passing Cape Verde, the most westerly point of the great African Continent, and while skirting down towards Sierra Leone, heavy mists of heat were wafted from the shore, and sometimes at eventide enveloped us in an atmosphere approaching in kind that dear old English fog we had left behind us, always supposing the latter had been cooked up to the same temperature, 86° in the shade.

It is really wonderful how quickly time passes at sea, when weather is good and passengers *en rapport;* and it is also surprising the interest taken in things that on shore, amid the hum of business and the clash of life, would be ignored, slighted, or noticed but to be passed over. Many, no doubt, will ask the question as to how amusements are to be perpetuated in so limited a sphere. What are the ladies to do? they cannot go shopping and admiring this duck of a hat or that love of a bonnet; there is no band promenade or bazaars to attend; there is scarcely an appreciable amount of scandal, certainly not sufficient to keep conversation going for any length of time—therefore what is to be done? Oh, much! and serious business too—many a case of flirtation on board has resulted in a life long mis——I mean happiness, thereafter. It is a dangerous proximity for both sexes, this meeting at every meal, and chatting and enjoying themselves between times; for I hold that as the moth cannot flutter for a long time around the shining light without being singed, neither can that young doctor there who is at present studying in feminine co-partnership the effects of phosphorus on the waves, or that

Digitized by Google

very *civil* engineer who, as his distinction denotes, is politely explaining the wonders of steam to a pair of dark eyes much interested in the science—neither, I say, can be thrown continually into this society without finding a centre of attraction from which it will be difficult to escape. As to the man, he has no billiards, no club, no morning papers, no quotations of stock to worry about; but in lieu of all these he has a generally happy-go-lucky air about him as he shambles on deck in slippered feet before breakfast, arrayed in pyjamas of the brightest colouring and lightest material; he has his salt-water bath, his cigar; there is always a little game of cards on hand; backgammon, cribbage, and chess are to the fore; and it is really refreshing to see the interest exhibited in the throwing of dice in that frantic excitement of leaden horses and card-board turf, known as 'the race game.' But all these offerings upon the altar of pleasure sink into insignificance as the constellation Taurus attains his altitude in the Zodiac of our amusements. A cow is a useful thing on board, especially if she supplies fresh milk in sufficient quantities to amalgamate satisfactorily with the tea and coffee, without your being put under a compliment to 'Swiss condensed.' A calf, although his voice is somewhat monotonous, and fails to gratify the ear after about half an hour's lowing, eats well with good seasoning and Limerick ham, yet cow and calf we could possibly spare; but no, not Bull, never Bull, glorious method of killing time and changing money. This no doubt requires explanation; here goes then to explain. The game of Bull, as played on board ship, consists of eight iron rings encased in leather, and looking like flat slabs, and a black board a yard in width and length, divided by white lines into twelve squares, and raised at a very light angle from the ground, form-

Digitized by Google

ing in fact an inclined plane. The object of the player is from a given distance to drop the leather-covered rings into the spaces numbered, avoiding the lines and the two spaces at the top, in each of which is painted a bull's head, hence the name. There they are, sensible men on shore, men of family, men of politics, men of position, flinging for hours these leather slabs, and apparently with as real an interest as though the fate of nations depended on their success. Oh, it is a treat sitting below in your cabin to hear the dull thud, thud, of the rings falling on the bull-board, and the shouts of execration on one hand, and delight on the other, when an unlucky player scores a 'bull,' which you must know deducts from his total ten points. It has its drawbacks, this fascinating game, for it sometimes induces a flirting with profanity from unlucky players; in fact, I once heard a bullist say that he never swore so much in his life as at that——but stay, it were as well to leave the rest unsaid.

Music, drama, and song were well represented on board—'The *Nubian* Serenaders' one evening, and 'The *Nubian* Blacks' another, made us feel quite Burgess-and-Moorish; and it was with difficulty we were restrained from proposing supper at the Criterion, or an oyster at Scott's. In connection with this Christy entertainment, an amusing incident occurred; the tambourine of the troupe was my business manager, Mr. Arthur Fry, who had brought with him a couple of life-size ventriloquial figures, and one of these, representing an old lady, he had placed for greater safety in his cabin on the afternoon of the performance. Now, it so happened that he shared his cabin with a French gentleman, who, like his countrymen, enjoyed an excitable disposition allied to a profound admiration of *les belles*

Digitized by Google

dames. This gentleman having occasion to visit his berth just prior to close of dinner, returned mysteriously, and whispered to the commander that there was a lady in his cabin. The captain sent in a steward, who returned apparently somewhat scared at the singular personage inside; a second was detailed, who presently reappeared, with the best part of a table napkin stuffed down his throat to prevent convulsive cacchination. So the commander, followed by a large section of the company, crowded in to see the female occupant of the cabin, who had frightened the Frenchman from his propriety. I need not add that peals of laughter were the result of the visit; and I am somewhat of the opinion that had the lady proved more attractive in presentment, our Parisian friend would scarcely have been so quickly scared away. He was a genuine novelty any way you took him—a staunch royalist; a believer in the Chambord dynasty; the sounds of the Marseillaise acted upon him like a horse-fly on a collar-gall.

We had theatricals, too, with some very promising lady and gentleman amateurs, our commander combining the duties of prompter, stage manager, master carpenter, etc., with dances to follow each performance. And although a moving angle of from five to fifteen degrees is not an assistant to graceful dancing, still there was amusement in watching the manner in which the waltzers went cannoning against each other, and occasionally, following the lurch of the vessel, rattling against the cabin-sides. Nearing the Equator we come into the region of shoals of flying-fish. There they go skimming along like a flight of swallows, just a few feet above the waves. Their wing is like a broad extended fin, from four to six inches in length. I have one now before me as I write; it flew on board as we were crossing the Line, and I

Digitized by Google

rescued it from the cook, and had it preserved as a 'fishy' reminiscence of the Equator.

Our old friend the polar star is hourly declining in the heavens, and soon the constellation of the 'Cross' must usurp the place in the southern skies of that bright luminary, who, now far down in the north to us, is still watching high above the hearts and homes which many leave behind. An unwavering guide, the mariner's steadfast friend, well has that twinkling orb been praised for its truth; and now in the enjoyment of a brilliant tropical starlight night—and they are starlight nights in equatorial skies—let me bid adieu to it in the words of the poet of all ages and all time, who says:

> 'Constant as the Northern Star,
> To whose fixed, true, unbending quality
> There is no fellow in the firmament.'

Though spared the infliction of a visit from Neptune whilst crossing the Line, that incident did not transpire without some little practical joking on the part of our fellow-travellers, one of whom was specially singled out to receive due honours on the memorable occasion. He had distinguished himself somewhat by a prudent capacity as a card-player, and an unreliability of statement which rendered it difficult to pin absolute faith to the facts he propounded. Having been inducted into the bath-room, denuded of one-half of his whiskers and moustache by judicious barbering, a tin of original mixture—comprising soft-soap, flour, and feathers—upset over his head, he was gently toppled into the bath, and requested to state whether he would 'pass' or take 'miss.' Two or three others who had assisted at the preceding ceremony came in for a share of the consequences, as a leg-up here and a push-down there had

Digitized by Google

the desired effect of producing four or five drowned rats in less time than it takes to relate the occurrence. Good boys! they must have their outlet sometimes; the boiler of propriety would surely burst were it not for the safety-valve of indiscretion occasionally opened as a relief.

As we approached St. Helena a fuller sea was noticeable; and as we neared the prison-home of the great Bonaparte, while watching the phosphoric lights dancing at our wake, I was struck with the irony of fate which sent the latest of the Napoleonic race to perish ignobly in a miserable skirmish with ill-armed savages, fighting in the service of that nation who had defeated the soldiers, crushed the hopes, and imprisoned upon a pigmy island his great progenitor.

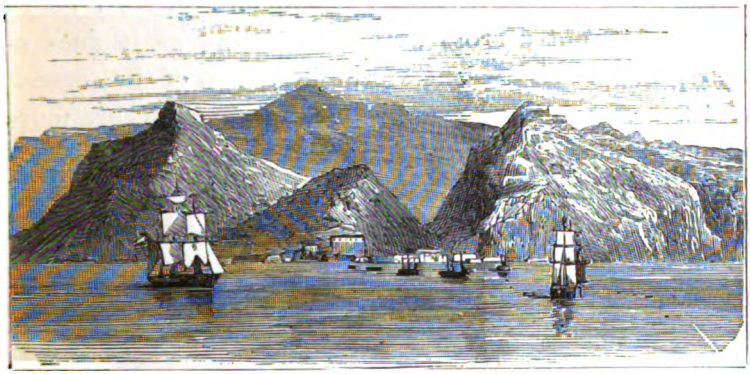
A word in passing this little isle, which has secured a prominent notch in the world's history as the death-place of one of her mightiest conquerors. It is disappointing to look at from the sea, presenting as it does a huge wall of rock, which natural embattlement almost entirely surrounds the island. In the centre is the highest altitude, 'Diana's Peak;' and three huge basaltic columns, known respectively as 'Lot,' 'Lot's Wife,' and 'The Chimney,' combine to form a geological point of attraction. But its greatest interest centres upon the fact of its having been the exile home of that colossal military genius of France, whose name, with that of Cæsar and of Alexander, will be handed down to posterity as long as history lives and language remains to tell the story of great deeds.

It seems but yesterday that I was conversing with the brother of a surgeon who attended the post-mortem examination of Napoleon's remains, and who mentioned the following incident in connection therewith. The

Digitized by Google

surgeon I refer to was Dr. Rutledge, and he it was who placed the Emperor's heart in a silver cup, which he hermetically sealed by fusing an English coin of the reign of George III. upon the aperture of the goblet—that heart which had ever contemned the Georges of Hanover, and which English money could never buy, sealed at last by the image it despised and the dross it rejected! *Finem respice.*

While in the tropics in the early morning, attired in light pyjamas, it was good fun to have a bath supplied by the hose-pipe; and while the said hose-pipe is before



St. Helena, from the North.

us, let me say a word in praise of the system of fire-drill practised weekly on board these South African steamers. You are quietly settled at 'tiffin,' enjoying your fruit and cup of coffee, when the clang of the alarm-bell is heard, and all is bustle, but no confusion. Every man is at his right place; the officers opposite the respective boats it will be their duty to command in the event of leaving the vessel; each steward, blanket in hand, to assist in smothering the flame; hose-bearers and firemen all ready; half a dozen brass nozzles spurting copious streams of water; everything orderly, and all performing their drill in a manner which adds confidence to the

Digitized by Google

passengers and reflects great credit upon all concerned —officers and men. It is a most commendable feature in the arrangements of these floating villages, and deserving of due appreciation.

'Is that the Southern Cross?' was my exclamation when that famed constellation was pointed out to me a couple of nights after crossing the Line; 'well, of all the unmitigated frauds to get up such a reputation for celestial greatness, you are the worst!' And although I afterwards came to modify this strongly expressed opinion, I still hold that, as a great constellation, the Southern Cross is decidedly disappointing. To begin with, it is not a cross at all, consisting as it does of four principal stars—one of the first, two of the second, and one of the third magnitude—forming a figure more in shape like a diamond; and in star-gazing your attention would be attracted to half a dozen other points of heavenly interest, rather than that which should naturally rivet it, when exploring for the first time the starlit glories of the southern skies.

But time runs on, and though

> 'A starlit sky is o'er our head—
> A quiet breeze around;

and though the voyage acquaintanceships of many are fast ripening into more friendly relations, in a few hours we shall anchor in Table Bay, and the pleasant and agreeable party will go upon their various ways, certain in the reflection that, under similar auspices, they never can again assemble, and feeling an amount of regret at the impending close of a voyage—pleasant, though prolonged—leaving, as it assuredly will, memories stored in the recollection of many, to be recalled as one of those pleasurable milestones on life's wayside, whose bright-

Digitized by Google

ness shines out by contrast with a usual setting of gloom.

The loud report of a cannon, the racket of chain cable, the whirr of the deck engine, and the silence of the screw, all convince me that we have reached our goal, and, gazing out of my cabin port-hole, I see Table Mountain, the splendid background of Cape Town. I know it at once—it comes right at you—the air is so rarefied and clear that distance is lost, and you imagine you can count the layers of rock of which the mountain is composed. Table Mountain is not alone in forming the background, and has for its *confrères* the Devil's Peak to the left, and the Lion's Head and Rump to the right. I confess that it requires a little imagination to form the shape of the king of the forest from the configuration of the two last-named mountains, but it is a passable similitude when the lordly animal is fully stretched. There is a signal-station on one of these hills, and great is the hauling up and down of bunting, most various as to shape, colour, and, no doubt, meaning. And there is Table Bay—and a handsome sheet of water it is—with the setting I have just described looming up on its right; whilst far off in the distance is a splendid rugged chain of mountains bluely outlined, and running from the left, out to the sea, are the Blaauwberg Hills, a strip of bright white sand at their base, producing a most brilliantly picturesque effect, and resembling a low-lying silver cloud glistening in the early morning light. Mail-boats arrive, and return to shore laden with bags of correspondence, friends greet friends, and congratulation and words of welcome are on every lip. All is eager anticipation and curiosity in new-comers as to what Cape Town is like, and similar sentiments actuate returned résidenters as to family and friends, and the

Digitized by Google

Cape Town, Table Mountain, and Table Bay Docks.

Digitized by Google

incidents that have occurred in the interim of their absence. I step down the ladder to the little sailing-boat alongside, her sails are trimmed to the wind, she makes one tack, and then, answering well to her helm, glides into the dock; her prow rasps the side of the jetty, I spring ashore, a false step, a hurried recovery, a cloud of dust rises around me, that dust red and sandy, and thus acquaintance is first formed with the great continent of Africa.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

CAPE TOWN, FROM SEA AND SHORE—A GLIMPSE OF ITS HISTORY, ITS BUILDINGS, HOTELS, AND MALAYS.

AFTER a short saunter on *terra firma* I returned on shipboard, and from the quarter-deck indulged in a critical examination of South Africa's capital. The general appearance of Cape Town, as viewed from the sea, is somewhat sterile and barren, owing to an apparent want of foliage, a burnt-up look from the grass on the hillsides, and the prominence of patches of red sand liberally distributed throughout the background. Its appearance could scarcely have been that of a 'promised land' to the sturdy Bartholomew Diaz, when, towards the close of the fifteenth century, he sighted what he was pleased to term the Cabo Tormentoso, or Stormy Cape, and which he had unconsciously rounded on a voyage of discovery ended at Algoa Bay, where now stands the flourishing town of Port Elizabeth. But his master, John of Portugal, regarding the point of land as an augury of happier fortunes, renamed his worthy mariner's discovery as Cabo de Bona Esperanza—the Cape of Good Hope—and could I have resurrected his Majesty in the flesh, I would gladly have done so, and enabled him to enjoy the result of his prognostications in the shape of an extensive and, as I afterwards discovered, prosperous and improving capital, to a still more prosperous and im-

Digitized by Google

proving colony. Well to the front, and prominent above the water-line of the bay, I could see the castle and citadel, and over it the flag of England waving in the breeze, as it has done since 1806, when General Janssens hauled down the ensign of the Netherlands before Sir David Baird's successful attack. A curious history pertains to this castle of Cape Town, as an examination of any old works that tell of its early occupation by its Dutch masters will show. There will you learn of how Jan Van Riebeck, as early as 1652, empowered by the Dutch East India Company, landed and built it; of how, with it as a base, the early settlers drove back the Hottentots and Kaffir races into the interior as far as the Great Fish River; of the wondrously even and phlegmatic life of its governors and garrisons; of the punishments it has beheld; of the coming of the French Huguenot refugees it saw after the Edict of Nantes; of the development of slavery beneath its walls, of the terrible gales that have howled over it; of the wreckage that has been washed up almost to its base; of the succession of governing bodies holding office within it; and the curious series of events it must have witnessed from the entries in its chronological chart, which include the advent of a smiling infant, as 'first child born in Fort of Good Hope, June 6th, 1652,' to the incarceration of Cetchwayo, the final Act in the closing of the recent Zulu War. We learn in this old log-book that far back in the seventeenth century a volunteer was sentenced to one hundred blows from the butt of his musket for wishing the purser at the devil for serving out penguins instead of beef and pork; and how a couple more misguided individuals for stealing a cabbage expiated the crime by three years in irons on Robben Island. And the prospect

Digitized by Google

of good eating and drinking at a comfortable hotel on shore, where they guarantee penguins are not included in the cuisine, and a cabbage as a side-dish does *not* necessitate a possible sojourn in manacles for a prolonged period in a sea-girt isle, convince you that things are very much pleasanter if less novel than they were in the good old days of Cape Town Castle long ago.

Whilst musing thus, a new object appeared in sight, namely, H.M. troopship *Himalaya*, destined to bring to England the survivors of the 2-24th Regiment, and the widows and children of those who lost their lives at the fatal field of Isandhlwana.

A few minutes later we entered the dock; and of this dock speak reverently, as it has cost the Cape a lot of money, and the colonists are very proud of its accommodation. And it is no bad dock either, and the morning we arrived contained five or six large steamers of the Union and Donald Currie Lines lying within it, and there appeared still room for more. A lot of Coolies, Malays, Hottentots, Kaffirs, and other gentlemen of swarthy skin began to put in an appearance, and under the direction of a brawny white man of strong lung and profane habit busied themselves with the arrangements for loading and unloading. There is a good deal of the want to be shown the way how to do it amongst these Cape quay porters; they are not enthusiastically devoted to hard work, but do not appear to be altogether unwilling if put in the right groove and kept well 'bossed up.' I was particularly struck with the jaunty, elegant positions assumed by one of these fellows, a tall, well-looking Kaffir, as he kept attitudinising in a most graceful manner, the evident result of natural instinct; his wide-awake hat, embellished with a few short ostrich feathers, set on one side of his woolly head, and a

Digitized by Google

canvas sack, stamped 'This side up, JB 1492,' forming his overcoat.

These dock Coolies, when I came to engage their services for the removal of baggage, I found tarred with the same brush of extortion and roguery as their brethren at home, on whose rapacity it is needless to dilate—the quay porter is a similar animal 'all the world around.' Having partially succeeded in allaying their greed by a combination of forcible language and fair promises, we started with a heavy dray of baggage to run the gauntlet of the dreaded Customs, and reaching the examination offices, beheld the cheerful sight of our fellow-passengers' baggage and its contents gaily scattered around, and being subjected to the scalpel of Revenue dissection. Apropos of these Customs, endeavouring to ingratiate myself by a show of facetiousness, I ventured to remark to one rigid-looking official that I thought it 'a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance,' but received a chilling 'Indeed' for reply, pronounced in a most freezing manner, and in the anything but dulcet tones of the Northern Briton. If that official should fail as an Inland Revenue officer he can start as a Real Ice Company, Limited, and be his own refrigerator, and I venture to prophesy his success. However, one sample is not to be taken as representing the whole of the Cape Town Customs officials, from whom I subsequently received the greatest courtesy and consideration.

There is an unfinished, not to say incomplete, appearance about Cape Town thoroughfares, owing in a measure to reconstruction of premises, which suggests to the stranger that one half was built yesterday and they are finishing the rest to-day; the red sand flying about the unpaved streets, the newness of the stone or concrete

Digitized by Google

fronts of the buildings, all assist in conveying this impression. Owing to inadequate paving the streets are equally disagreeable in dry as in wet weather, for in the former case, should it be but moderately windy, the dust is blinding; whilst on the other hand, a tolerable supply of rain produces some of the richest and most delightful mud I have ever enjoyed struggling through. Adderley Street, the principal one of the town, is, however, assuming a dignified appearance, and boasts quite a line of handsome business premises, elegant shops, banks, etc.; a splendid new railway station has been recently added; and at the top a shady avenue, nearly a mile in length, leads past the rear of Government House, which, by the way, is a modest enough looking building, without any pretensions to grandeur about it.

I must dismiss Cape Town streets for the present, and take a look at its hotels, for hath not the poet said:

'Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn?'

Colonial hotels are arranged differently to English ones, and putting the advantages and disadvantages of each into the scale, I think the beam is likely to show an even balance. One of their peculiarities is a superfluity of attendance in the dining-room to counterbalance a paucity elsewhere. But there are many drawbacks which are amply compensated by the glorious immunity afforded of being able to look the waiter straight in the face, with buttoned pockets; ignore the existence of the chambermaid; treat the boots as though he had no being; and all this you can do in a Colonial hotel if you choose, as you are charged so much a day for everything, the average tariff being about 12s. 6d. Meals are on the table at given hours, and whether you partake of them or not the bulk sum is charged. Fruit

Digitized by Google

constitutes an item of every meal, and it was with a feeling of gastronomic exultation over the friends we had left behind us, that I sat down a few days before Christmas to a table laden with peaches, plums, oranges, and strawberries, the latter exceedingly fine in size and brilliant in colour, though somewhat lacking the full flavour of their more aristocratic English brethren.

On retiring to bed a couple of nights after my arrival at Cape Town, from my open window I was a listener to the following conversation between two gentlemen who had evidently been interviewing some stimulating influences.

'What's the use of your talking? sure, you're only twenty-one, and I'm forty, and I knew Ireland before you were born?'

'Well, but you know I belong to one of the oldest families in the county!'

'Yah, man, don't be talkin'! I'm the blackest Protestant in the Cape to-night.'

Dear old Ireland! your children couldn't be happy 7,000 miles away from you without wrangling about family and religion.

Slumber approaches, and so does the joyous mosquito. You are just off, and find he is just on; and his song, although very musical, scarcely realises your ideas of a lullaby. Ping-pi-n-n-n-g! It is a wonderfully loud noise for so tiny an insect, and the annoyance he creates is in the same ratio; his bite or sting is scarcely felt, but its after-considerations are such as would probably have commended themselves to James I. of England, who is historically reported to have said, 'A good itch and good nails to scratch it is one of the pleasures of a king.' How would it be to have a look for him? Yes! all right; but where the deuce are the matches? Here!

Digitized by Google

where? that's the tooth-powder! Well, *here?* Yes, these are matches; but where's the box? Safety-matches, by all that's brilliant, left loose on the candlestick, by the off-colour diamond who looks after the sleeping-apartments. Ah, this *is* jovial—a bright idea—a fusee will strike on anything, and possibly ignite the candle. Ugh! eh? what the—— Hang me, but the blankets are alight, and the candle isn't! Pooh, the mosquito; let him do his worst! And he does, and next morning you awaken with one eye bunged up, a couple of nobs on your forehead, and an eruption of lumps on face, neck, and hands, that seem to have secreted all the irritability of ten thousand ill-humours; and the charm of which is, that the more you scratch and rub them, the more they repay your care by additional unpleasantness.

Opposite the Masonic Hotel is the Parade Ground, a large strip of sandy soil, where a few parched-looking trees drag on a miserable existence, and where dusky brethren disport at cricket, playing the game with an indefatigability that would charm the heart of a Lilly-white, and raise an approving 'Well hit' from the Graces themselves.

Dutch-built houses predominate throughout Cape Town; and no wonder, seeing the length of time the Dutchmen held sway over town and Colony. These houses consist of large square blocks, very substantial—the thickness of the walls may be measured in feet—flat roofs, and externally painted a drab or white colour. Each possesses—the pride of Dutch architecture—a stoep, or stoop, a series of raised steps, culminating in a platform generally the length of the front of the building, walled or railed in, and where Mynheer Van Dunck of old would sit at ease enjoying the curling smoke of his

Digitized by Google

tobacco, invoking blessings on Sir Walter Raleigh for his importation of the fragrant weed. Some good samples of the old-built Dutch houses are to be found in Strand Street, well named, as sand and shingle abound therein, and the virtues of Macadam are unknown. They have drains, and dogs too, in Cape Town. The former are open, offensive, and typhoid-producing; the latter are nondescript, mixed, and indescribable. I saw a canine gentleman refreshing himself by lapping up copious libations of one of the aforesaid drains; presently he was joined by another, a third, a fourth, and a fifth. Amongst the lot it was impossible to define the breed of any individual one. They seemed, as Lord Byron did *not* say—

> Terrier and pug, mastiff and hound,
> In one red mongrel blent.

Nor are a portion of the biped inhabitants of Cape Town less mixed, for its population is as varied as its language may be said to be polyglot. You have Europeans, Dutch Africanders, Malays, Hottentots, Kaffirs; and the island of St. Helena has added a bastard black element whose descendants are known as Cape boys. Amongst these various races the language principally used is Cape Dutch—a somewhat hybrid and very consonantal one, and being guttural, is more or less useful for clearing the throat; it must be carefully attempted, however, by new-comers, especially such as have delicate teeth, or jaws of inferior tension, as it is likely to break the first and dislocate the second. After a week or two the simpler words may be essayed; but, gentle reader, how would you like to pronounce 'vermogelijkheden' immediately on arrival?

The Malays, who constitute an important element of

Digitized by Google

the Cape Town population, are a picturesque and Oriental-looking people, and are still more so in their habits and customs.

A Malay wedding is only surpassed in interest by a Malay funeral, which is a gorgeous spectacle, the defunct being carried in a sitting attitude and buried in a hill-side with the face turned towards Mecca. The great ambition of the Malay is to do the pilgrimage to that holy city, and such as have accomplished this work are distinguishable from their less fortunate brethren by wearing a gown or gabardine of the sacred green, the colour of the Prophet's banner. It is easy to see that these are the swells amongst the faithful, and they dazzle you with the brilliance of their togas, and carry themselves with a—well, not a *devil*-may-care air, but with the air of the personage who does similar duty amongst Mohammedans. They are all more or less useful, being excellent workmen, artisans, drivers, etc., and work well on the other days of the week to enjoy themselves on the Mondays, when, in company with their wives (and being Mohammedans they are not restricted to one of these necessaries to a respectable existence), they drive out and take their pleasure in their own particular style. The Malay women are something to behold, and are the most rainbow-apparelled feminines, I take it, at present on view in this sublunar sphere. Let me attempt to describe the dress of one of these ladies. A red silkhandkerchief tied squarely over the forehead, a bright blue shawl around the shoulders, and a still brighter yellow dress beneath, extended to its utmost limits by, I really don't know how many, stiffly starched petticoats. I can't say that the Malay woman is very graceful in appearance, resembling an upturned cauliflower as to figure, though some are fairly good-looking

Digitized by Google

in face; and I once heard a party of them sing while executing a dance, and anything more truly awful I never again hope to hear. This struck me as singular, as the men appear to be endowed with musical faculties and an immense appreciation for melodies of all kinds, and are to be met on summer nights patrolling the streets singing solos and choruses, a deep bass like a drone coming in occasionally with a most peculiar effect. I met a party one evening, and listened to their song. I mentally soliloquised: 'Now I shall hear in reality some curious old Oriental ballad or Paynim chant, probably handed down from the days of the Hegira, and in which the story of Mohammed and his wondrous life will be recounted.' So I waited, and they advanced, and as the strains of their song fell upon my listening ear I fancied I had heard the melody before, and I said, 'It is! no—it can't be. Yes, it is—"My Grandfather's Clock," by everything that's dreadful!'—and I fled.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR IN CAPE TOWN—PICNICS AND AL FRESCO DINING—AN INTERVIEW WITH CETCHWAYO—SUBURBAN SCENERY —A FAREWELL PERFORMANCE.

To you, Northern reader, whose Christmas associations are those of frost and snow, yule-logs, and holly-berries, it will be difficult to make you realise the happiness of a Christmastide wanting in these surroundings. And yet the Cape people seem happy enough, and there is no stint in their enjoyments, nor want of warmth in either their congratulations or their weather; for the one is hearty, honest, and free, and the other is 91° in the shade. It seems to be a jubilee for all species of the heterogeneous population, Malays, Coolies, and Kaffirs inclusive; and the latter offer you the compliments of the season, which, however, the Malays do not seem to extend their courtesies to—like most Mohammedans their affection appears limited towards infidel dogs. This rule, however, does not apply to the coin of the realm when disgorged by the confiding Christian.

My first Cape Christmas was ushered in at early morning; the sun streamed down from a sky unflecked by a single cloud, and bathed the Devil's Peak and Table Mountain in a flood of brilliant light. While I stood at my window admiring the magnificent background of scenery the view afforded, a motley crowd of

Digitized by Google

young niggers, with drums and banners, marched past, singing a chorus which sounded like a blending of 'Rob Roy Macgregor' and 'Marching through Georgia.' The combinative melody was not particularly agreeable, and the drumming, kept up with unintermitting enthusiasm, reminded me of Belfast on the '12th of July,' and William of Orange of 'glorious, pious, and immortal memory.' The banners carried by these ebony 'waits' seemed, however, to have been pressed into the service without any regard to political bias, for one bore the superscription of 'Solomon for the Assembly,' whilst another had 'Vote for a Merry Christmas,' the last three words having apparently been added and pasted over the candidate's name, all the flags being relics of a former election contest.

The churches were crowded: the services were all in accordance with the day. There is no lack of conventicles of all religious persuasions in Cape Town, from St. George's Cathedral down to the Mosque of the Malays, with all the intermediaries of Roman Catholic, Dutch Reformed, Scottish Kirk, Jewish Synagogue, etc., sandwiched in between; and if none of these suit, there is an Athenæum or Psychological Hall, with a secular lecturer on spiritualism and free thought.

The pleasantest greeting of Christmas good wishes recorded during my stay at the Cape was that conveyed in the first message by the South African Cable, just completed, bearing to Sir Bartle Frere the congratulations of England's Queen on the successful laying of telegraphic communication between the mother country and her colonial offspring. Man has truly realised the dream of Prospero by putting 'a girdle round about the earth.'

A Cape Town wedding! Passing one of the most

Digitized by Google

responsible-looking churches a couple of days after Christmas, my attention was attracted by what appeared to be a bridal *cortége*. Three carriages were drawn up opposite the main gate, with Malay drivers in full livery, and each man gorgeously turned out, his head surmounted with a Malay straw hat, which is so fearful and wonderful a construction I will not attempt to describe it.

A wedding in South Africa is very much like a wedding elsewhere: there is a bridegroom usually, and in most cases a bride; blushing bridesmaids and bereaved parents furnish the surroundings, and the parson, clerk, and pew-opener are prominently represented. There is a strange fascination about weddings and executions, and under its influence I decided to await the departure of the party.

They came: the bride was powdered and plain, the bridesmaids more powdered and plainer; the bridegroom looked, as most bridegrooms do, as if he couldn't help it, and loafed along after his bride in anything but a courtier-like fashion. The ground was wet, and the lady's dainty white satin shoes sank deeply into the red mud; and the conclusion to be deduced from the whole proceeding was that in all probability Benedick would have the privilege of nursing his life's partner through the influenza before half the honeymoon was over. An intelligent onlooker volunteered the information that the bride's paternal parent, who was a 'heavy father' in the fullest acceptation of the term, had a short time before 'gone' for a quarter of a million, paying 1s. 6d. in the pound as a solatium to his hungry creditors; and musing on the instability of mercantile human greatness, and the trusting confidence of mankind, I inflated my white umbrella as protection against the rays of the sun,

Digitized by Google

now registering 101° in the shade, and sought that bourne from whence no traveller returns, except plus brandy, soda, and ice.

I was curious to witness the New Year festivities of Cape Town people as celebrated in *al fresco* picnics, and accepted the invitation of a friend, an African Irishman, or Irish African, whose acquaintance I had the pleasure of making *en voyage*. The scene of operations was a suburb called Newlands, to which we drove, twenty or thirty strong, in a number of long break-vans; and I was astonished to find the woods completely filled with similar parties, and the air laden with the sounds of various musical instruments, from the soft chords of the romantic guitar to the blood-curdling tones of a Scotch bagpipe, to which latter a knot of 'Jocks' and 'Jennies' from the Land o' Cakes were dancing the Highland schottische, and subsequently rushing around in the fierce excitement of 'twos and threes,' as though the temperature was the same they were accustomed to 'langsyne' in 'Auld Reekie' or 'St. Mungo.' Farther on through the grounds, which by the way were those of the Bishop of Cape Town, I found a party of Germans, who, in the intervals between the dances, were giving vent to their patriotic feelings by chorusing 'Die Wacht am Rhein,' washing each refrain down with copious draughts of 'lager-bier.' A walk of a quarter of an hour's duration introduced a dozen of these curious groups; and when I returned to the camping-ground of my friend, I fancied I must have made a sort of tour of the world, so many and so pronounced were the nationalities with which I had come in contact. But the nationality of the others was as naught compared with that encountered on my return; for the camp of Irish-Africa was easily discernible by a giant green flag

Digitized by Google

bearing the harp and sunburst of Ireland's ancient greatness, and assembled beneath its folds were quite a number from the 'ould sod,' and others whose kindly instincts were none the less pronounced and indicative of the hospitality of the 'Green Isle' because the accident of birth had made South Africa their natal place. An ingenious youth who had lately returned from 'the front' was cooking at a gipsy fire what the Dutch call 'sassaatjes'—chunks of meat broiled on bits of wood, and flavoured with currie-powder; the kettle boiled merrily; the locusts and spiders dropped down in a friendly sort of way; the musicians thrummed on; flitting figures moving through the lancer-quadrilles showed here and there between the waving trees; the sun got up straight over our heads, and looked down through the topmost boughs; the children whooped, the grown people laughed, and everyone enjoyed themselves with ten-horse power, and defied the thermometer, which kept steadily at 84° in spite of all the umbrageous screens that could be thrown between it and the blazing light outside.

On our return, as we approached the town, one of the most gorgeous sights I ever beheld met my gaze; it was the splendid background of Cape Town, illuminated by the golden hues of the setting sun, while stealing over the top of Table Mountain was a white filmy vapour, known as the 'table-cloth,' the certain precursor of the 'south-easter,' a wind which the Cape people say generally takes three days to blow itself out, and drives dust the first, pebbles the second, and stones the third. It is no light and airy zephyr, as the foliage in and around the town amply testifies; even the trees and shrubs of the carefully kept Botanic Gardens suffering severely from the 'Cape Doctor,' as the breeze is

Digitized by Google

sometimes styled, and not inaptly, as it does for Cape Town what its Town Council and Urban Authorities appear unable or unwilling to do—viz., drives out the contagion, low fever, etc., generated by the insufficient drainage and want of care exhibited in the administration of its sanitary requirements.

Attending a band promenade in the Botanic Gardens, where fashionable Cape Town disports its form and airs its fine garments, I had an opportunity of first seeing Sir Bartle Frere, at that time the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, and a prominent figure in Imperial politics, owing to the Zulu War then just concluded. A tall, gentlemanly-looking man, possessing an evidently suave manner to those with whom he was brought in contact, held in high esteem by the large majority of English-speaking South African colonists, though a minority have steadily opposed his line of politics, and the programme he sought to carry out. The following Sunday I had the privilege of interviewing Cetchwayo, the Zulu King, who was a close prisoner in the citadel, having just arrived from Zululand, and been placed under the charge of Major Poole, R.A., who subsequently fell at Laing's Nek, in the Transvaal War. Having obtained permission for myself and wife to see the king, we were ushered into the presence of his royal duskiness, and found him extended on a mat, an embroidered smoking-cap on his head, and a blanket carelessly disposed over his body and extremities. The ceremony of introduction was short, and consisted in the orderly's words, 'Baas! English gentleman!' whereupon he raised himself on his left elbow, and rather gracefully extended his right hand, which we shook very cordially. Failing a knowledge of the Zulu language, I expressed by pantomimic action signs of admiration for his physique,

Digitized by Google

which appeared to please him, as his eyes sparkled and he exhibited his teeth, which, like those of most African natives, were very even and white. His interpreter, Mr. Longcaste, then came on the scene, and from him, and through him, I learned something of Cetchwayo's sentiments. He was desirous, he said, to go back to his country and live quietly there, and Mr. Longcaste volunteered the opinion that he thought he meant what he said. He added that he did not ever want to fight the English, but that they attacked him, and what could he do? I shook hands with him on leaving, and having taken off my glove to do so, he laughed, and pointed at the five-fingered dogskin with some slight suggestion of derision in his look, but in a perfectly good-humoured manner. His hand, which was small in proportion to his bulk and size of arm, was unusually soft, and his expression rather prepossessing. His physique is large, especially developed in the lower limbs; his height I was unable to determine very well, as he remained extended on his mat during the entire interview. His photographs fail to give any idea of the large amount of good-humour his face exhibits when pleased. In the next apartment, which was simply a deal partition, something like a 'loose box,' were a number of women, presumably his wives, attired in various styles of apparel, or want of apparel. Two of them struck me as being very tall, and a physiologist or a sculptor would no doubt have admired them excessively, as each could have indulged in a study of his particular branch of science or art without much of the interference produced by a superabundance of fashionable clothing. There were five in all, but they constituted only a portion of their sable liege lord's connubial happiness, and it was generally conceded that he was suffering

Digitized by Google

from loneliness owing to the absence of the rest of Mrs. Cetchwayo.

Cape Town possesses really charming and fashionable suburbs. Wynberg, Claremont, and Newlands, lying behind Table Mountain, are almost smothered in verdure; and beyond, at Constantia, are the famous vine-growing gardens of the Van Reenens and other pressers of Cape wines, most of whom were, when I visited them, somewhat exercised in their minds by the anticipation of a visit from the phylloxera, an ingenious little insect who performs the same kind office for the patrician grape as the Colorado beetle does for the more plebeian potato. The kindly hospitality of these great Cape wine-pressers is so well known, that I trust the day may never come to herald the arrival of their insect foe, the phylloxera, to the detriment of their loving-cups and the destruction of their vines.

On the seaboard side suburban Cape Town is equally fortunate, Seapoint and Greenpoint being exceptionally favoured localities; and from thence a circling path, known as the Kloof Road, runs round the base of 'The Lion's Head,' embracing views of the 'Table' and the series of bold mountains known as the 'Twelve Apostles,' while at every twist and turn of this exceptional highway the eye is attracted by huge boulder stones, which seem toppling over and ever ready to fall and grind everything beneath them into impalpable powder. If any 'stravagin' Irishman wends his way in this direction he will come in due course upon a little inlet of the sea, which the proprietor of the grounds adjoining, with more patriotism than geographical acumen, has christened 'Bantry Bay.' I need not add that a hearty Irish welcome is one of the distinguishing traits of the 'Baas' of 'Bantry Bay.'

Digitized by Google.

I gave twenty-two representations of my 'Odds and Ends' entertainment during my first visit to Cape Town, and arranged a 'grand farewell night' (as the playbills usually state) in the Good Hope Gardens. Now the Good Hope Gardens are so called more for purposes of nomenclature than for botanical reasons, for they have small claims on horticulture to recommend them; they possess 'bright and shining' gas-jets here and there among the trees, subservient entirely to the will of the breeze, and there is a band-stand, and an open-air theatre.

It was arranged that the dramatic and vocal portion of the performance should be given in the open-air theatre; the band and pipers of the 91st, now the Sutherland and Argyll Highlanders, was to add their brazen charms and 'Hieland pipes' to the attractions of the evening, and Captain Disney Roebuck, the proprietor of the Cape Town Theatre, kindly came to render aid to the programme, and, as the managers say, 'strengthen the bill.' But the French motto, amended in Cape Town, reads, 'Man proposes, but the south-easter disposes;' and although the Highlanders made a stolid fight against the howling wind as it rushed and rustled through the trees, the performance on the stage of the open-air theatre must have been the truest exposition of pantomime ever witnessed on its boards. But Cape people are so well acquainted with the vagaries of the south-east wind, that they conceded that it was all right, and enjoyed themselves with a hearty goodwill that left nothing to be desired. The Gardens were crowded, the band crashed away; some people promenaded, others skated in the rink; the enterprising lessee of the place discharged a few half-hearted squibs, some very unorthodox Roman candles, and about a

Digitized by Google

dozen semi-paralysed rockets, which he was pleased to call a 'grand firework display;' and amidst roaring wind, rustling branches, laughter, cheers, and general good-humour, I bade adieu to the public of Cape Town on the occasion of my 'grand farewell night' at the Good Hope Gardens.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

STARTING FOR THE DIAMOND FIELDS—THE HEX RIVER VALLEY—BEAUFORT WEST—COACH TRAVELLING—MIRAGE—CROSSING THE ORANGE RIVER—DU TOITS PAN SIGHTED—ARRIVAL AT KIMBERLEY.

'ʼTis not the miles we travel, but the pace that kills,' says the adage, and by implication it suggests the latter contingency as the result of fast and rapid movement. The journey from Cape Town to the Diamond Fields, as now performed in the minimum time of five and a half to six days, over a distance of rail and road under 700 miles, scarcely realises to modern ideas of quick progression 'the pace that kills.' It is no easy journey though, and the four and a half days' coach-travelling, with the briefest intervals for rest and the snatching of hasty meals, is an effort requiring some sustaining power, and results to most persons who 'do the voyage' for the first time in considerable fatigue, wear and tear of body, and occasionally much anxiety of mind.

The arrangements are made; go we must, therefore let us face the dangers and difficulties boldly, hoping to scare them by a firm front. A kind good-bye to Cape Town friends, some of whom I found amongst the most sterling of the many acquaintances it has been my lot to jostle in this world's pilgrimage; another look at that magnificent Table Mountain, of whose grandeur the eye never tires; a rush to and settling down in a railway

Digitized by Google

carriage, a screech of the engine, general banging of doors, whistling of guards, and ringing of bells, and away we go on the journey to South Africa's Field of Diamonds.

The most interesting point of the first day's travel is undoubtedly the Hex River Valley; and the railway cutting, as it actually scales the mountains in corkscrew fashion, is a triumph of engineering skill. I confess I felt pride in the ability of my countrymen in thus overcoming nature's almost insuperable obstacles when I looked out of my carriage-window and found the engine and guard's van forming the extremities of a semicircle, as serpent-fashion we crawled up an incline apparently a gradient of about 1 in 20, and worked our way to the summit of the over-topping chain of mountains, that seemed inaccessible but a few moments before. The view from the Hex River Station left behind us was exceedingly fine; the railway line skirted close to the river, and standing sentinel over the little station, far from the buzz of mankind, a broken chain of unequal mountains ranged, flinging shadows of the darkest night into the valley below. A cleft in this mountainous ridge admitted the rays of the setting sun, which in all its lurid glory illuminated a field of stratified rock that fairly burned and glistened in the ruddy beams, dazzling the vision with its brilliance, in wondrous contrast to the sable shadows beneath. The rocky strata was strikingly apparent in this cleft, and the lines were tumbled up and down and so peculiarly full of inequalities as to suggest an internal commotion hereabouts, that 'once upon a time' must have made matters pretty lively for the dwellers in the district, and interfered somewhat with the ordinary course of their respectable existence.

Digitized by Google

The ascent from the valley to the top of the mountain chain is seventeen miles by rail, and the descent on the other side, made with two engines and powerful 'brakes,' sixteen miles, ending at Montagu Road, where we arrived at seven in the evening, and put up for the night. Montagu Road seemed a nice place for an anchorite to settle in; a jumble of tents and wooden houses, occupied by railway employés, were scattered over a sandy flat opposite the hotel, and looked as though a passing caravan had made what the street musicians call a 'pitch' there. The principal water supply of the hotel was brought by the engines in their condensers, supplemented by a line of pipes laid to a distant spring, from which an attempt was made to pump the precious liquid up to the house, an effort attended with but little success. The hotel was far from bad, and I met here some of our fellow-passengers for the Diamond Fields, with whom we were shortly to become better acquainted in our road-travelling conveyance, the Union coach, from Beaufort to Kimberley. Conversation at the dinner-table became animated, freedom of speech and manner being the rule in Colonial hotels; and individually I must confess to a leaning for the absence of strict *rigueur* they exhibit, as it was possible to enjoy your meals without that feeling of 'mind your own business and I'll mind mine,' too often suggested by the formal and stand-off atmosphere of a *table d'hôte* at home, where everybody seems to regard his neighbour as though he had some designs upon either his purse or person.

An early start in the morning, and a comparatively short run will bring us to Fraserburg Road; that is, it should have done so in the ordinary course of things, but we were rather surprised, after running some seven

Digitized by Google

or eight miles, to find our engine reversed and backing the train over the same ground we had just covered. The explanation was sought and obtained: the guard of the train had been left behind; the fascinations of either the barmaid or her wares had been too many for a heart which even continual railway travelling had not entirely reduced to a fossil, and blinded by her beauty, or confused by the aroma of her liquors, he had sighed and lingered, and lingered and sighed; and the other officials, regarding him, I presume, as of ornament rather than use, sent the train on its way rejoicing.

Having picked him up at Montagu Road, cutting an hour and a half to waste in the going and returning, we made a fresh start, and in due course arrived at Fraserburg.

The line from thence had not been opened formally, and to keep up the interesting fiction we transferred ourselves and our baggage into two open trucks, where we sat on baskets, barrels, bundles, Kaffirs, in fact, anything we could find to sit on; and amongst a motley crowd of Malays, niggers, Hottentots, and railway navvies, we travellers to Beaufort endured a couple of hours' martyrdom beneath a burning and pitiless sun, as we whirled along the 'unopened' iron way to the terminal station at Beaufort West.

The little town, thickly planted with trees, nestled well out of sight. A forest of tents, the canvas homes of the railway constructors, looking like a military encampment, first came in view, and was outflanked with mountainous outposts, which resembled in their unequal ruggedness huge forts and giant bastions—earthworks constructed by Nature's sapper from the designs of Creation's engineer.

The evening was rapidly approaching as we steamed

Digitized by Google

into Beaufort West, and having interviewed our coach-guard, made our way to the hotel from whence the conveyance was to depart. A good solid supper of pork, ham, mutton, beef, venison, etc., was on the table, and shortly after recruiting the inward man I sought repose —I say sought, because my bedroom was partitioned off from the billiard-room, and opened by a door innocent of fastenings into a backyard, wherein some dusky pigs fitfully wandered about and occasionally poked their snouts even into the chamber I occupied, dogs barked intermittently, and fowls cackled; and between the animals outside, the human ditto within, and the knowledge that the start was fixed for one a.m., the wooing of the drowsy god seemed likely to end in a mere flirtation: but exhausted nature came to my aid, and I dropped off to sleep, to be rudely awakened by a sharp knocking at the door, accompanied by the magic words, 'Inspan, inspan!'

Some wonderful words have been manufactured in Southern Africa, and this is one of them. 'Inspan,' and its reverse, 'Outspan'—or to be more correct, 'Uitspan'—simply means the harnessing or yoking in of any draught animal or team, and the unyoking. They are terms of Dutch origin, but appear to be universally used by Britishers, Boers, and Kaffirs. Therefore the 'Inspan' notification of Rogers, the guard, shivered into airy nothings the brilliant dreams of diamonds and colossal fortunes accumulated by a visit to Africa's Tom Tiddler's ground, which a moment before had been riveting their links in my slumbering brain. It was pitch-dark outside where the coach and team of ten horses harnessed two and two, scarcely perceptible in the gloom, stood waiting to receive the passengers. We clambered into the covered waggon,

Digitized by Google

constructed to hold fifteen, three abreast, and the 'leader' having gripped the reins, and the 'driver' his long bamboo-handled whip, we squared ourselves for the start.

'You can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink,' is an adage as ancient as it is familiar; and I may venture to add—you can multiply him by ten and 'inspan' him in a Diamond Fields coach, but you can't make him pull, unless his mind and inclinations are in unison with yours. So we sat for three-quarters of an hour, during which time the leaders' heads were being dragged off, and the wheel-horses' ribs driven in, and the centre of the team grievously assaulted, to a running accompaniment of oaths, ejaculations, interjections, English, Dutch, and Kaffir, until a sudden change came over the spirit of the equines, and away they flew at a hand-gallop, bumping along an apology for a road, amidst a darkness so impenetrable that we sat still and prepared to be capsized with perfect resignation and equanimity of spirit.

Day soon broke and showed the boundless 'Veld' of South Africa, and on either side of the sandy track which did duty for a road spread miles of 'Karoo' flats, with chains of table-topped and conical hills, all of which bear such a family resemblance one to the other, that to see one is to see all. Coach-travelling in South Africa, with fine weather and agreeable company, is a tolerably enjoyable system of moving from place to place. The land innocent of enclosure stretches on either side as far as the eye can reach, except where now and then, at distances of sometimes ten and fifteen miles one from the other, you come on a few patches indifferently fenced or walled in near a Boer's farmhouse, which with its orchard, and perhaps a clump of willow

Digitized by Google

or blue gum-trees, seems a green oasis in the spacious 'Veld' of the parched 'Karoo.'

The landscape looks barren enough, covered as the sandy soil is with dried clumps of herbs like the sage-brush of some of the American prairies, while the crops of stones flourishing on the mountain-sides do not suggest vegetation of a profitable kind. It is remarkable how well sheep and oxen seem to thrive on this Karoo bush, fatten, grow hardy, and roam at their sweet will over pastures not measured by acres but square miles in extent; pastures which in certain seasons of the year are brilliant with variegated colour, when the 'Veld' flowers in countless numbers burst into bloom, and substitute for their lack of perfume the richness of their variegated hues.

As the day wears on and the summer sun rises, a grateful feeling of thanks is directed to the white roof of our coach, the window-sails are pulled down, and the light breeze which generally plays over the rolling 'Veld' is more than welcome. Far off the eye sees possibly a cool lake, studded with islets, a long, low-lying promontory running out from the land; castles and crumbling walls are set upon its banks, whilst mountain-ridges, conical, flat, or rugged, form the background. It is so real and so apparent at first sight that it is hard to believe it is merely the refraction of rays of light passing through air of different density, and commonly known as the 'mirage,' and I know of no place where mirages can be seen more constantly than on the 'Veld' of South Africa. While gazing at the curious forms the mirage presents, a moving mass of silver probably meets the eye—a drove of springboks, their white-striped sides glittering in the sun, startled from their tranquil grazing by the

Digitized by Google

approach of our waggon, go bounding along, and cross the road five or six hundred yards ahead of us. He is a smart hound that can run down the South African antelope when he stretches himself and means to go. He is playful at first, and bounds up five or six feet high in erratic jumps as he scuds away ; but when he lays himself down to his work, and fairly settles himself to it, he does not give you many seconds to say 'good-bye' to the white tip of his tail, as he disappears into distance, annihilating time and space by his fleetness and alacrity of movement.

'Lots of fruit in the orchard, and the old Baas says you can help yourselves,' says Rogers the guard, in his most cheery tones when we 'outspanned' for dinner (save the mark) at an old Boer's house ; so we clenched the invitation by a raid on his peaches, and returned to the waggon with an ample supply. Dinner at a Dutch farmhouse, *en route* to the Diamond Fields, is a delightful simplicity, consisting chiefly of 'schaap fleish'—(mutton) —eggs, brown-bread, and coffee, the latter generally very bad, and containing a larger proportion of warm water than any other ingredient.

The coaches have a series of houses of call on the road, where passengers can refresh, but it is a mark of favour on the part of the proprietor to supply these wants; he does it seemingly under compulsion, and would just as soon the custom were carried elsewhere. At one of these houses, as soon as we arrived the old 'Baas' shut himself up in his own room, and steadfastly refused to see or speak to any of our party, which contained a number of Colonial and Dutch-speaking persons.

The close of our first day's coaching brought us to Murraysburg, a very small town; and immediately after

Digitized by Google

supper we turned in, twenty hours' almost continuous road-travelling having rendered rest in a bed rather a luxury, and a prospective early start at four in the morning being before us, no time was lost in securing slumber. The indefatigable Rogers, our guard and general adviser, kept his party up to time, and told us a story of how as he lay in the coach, watching and warding our baggage, and a strong box of bullion for the Standard Bank at Kimberley, he found a Kaffir loafing around in the darkness; of how he challenged him, and how he, the Kaffir, did wander away with stealthy step and accelerated motion, as the quick sharp cocking of a revolver fell upon his listening ear; and we felt unutterable things, and our untravelled hearts welled up in thankfulness to our protector, and we should probably have proposed a vote of thanks or other appropriate testimonial, had it not been subsequently discovered that the midnight marauder was none other than a straying ass, who was cultivating a nocturnal acquaintance with the waggon-wheels in the hope of relieving an irritation of the skin from which he was temporarily suffering. Twelve o'clock, and Richmond, and here we dine—an early hour, but to people up from four in the morning, with an apology for a breakfast at a Boer's house at eight o'clock, not a bit too soon; and while here we met a party of travellers from the Diamond Fields journeying to the Cape. Half-past one, inspan. Off we went again, and at 8.15 arrived at the little village of Hanover, where we remained till five the next morning. At midday we reached Philipstown, a small place, exceedingly Dutch; three-fourths of its houses owned by Boer farmers living miles away, and only occupied by them on the Sundays, when Divine service is held; or at 'Naachmaal,' a religious festival

Digitized by Google

occurring about once every three months. We dined here —I say dined, because it was our second meal—and we understood our next would-be 'supper,' that being the colonial term for the third or last meal of the day; but the hotel and its accommodation were not only primitive in arrangements, but positively disagreeable and unpleasant. However, our stay was fortunately brief, and after a severe day of trial to temper and body—the latter occasioned by a warm wind, like the breathing of an incipient furnace—we cried a halt at a Boer's house just as our watches showed the tenth hour, having done seventeen hours' hard travel from the time we started in the morning. Now a Dutch Boer is a peculiar mortal, and he is an early-to-bed man, and having got there takes a good deal of wakening up; and it was not without attacking all the doors, back and front, and a rattling fusilade upon the window-shutters, that our object was achieved, and the 'Baas' put in an appearance. A couple of beds only to be had, one of which was allotted to me, and the other to a doctor of our party, who, as a pain and ache killer, was deemed of special importance. The rest of the party slept where they could; but South Africa possesses a climate where sleeping out of doors at almost any season is not attended by the baneful results of such an experiment in other climes, so they all came up smiling when, at four o'clock in the morning, we 'moved on' again. At eight o'clock we sighted the Free State, and its border line, the Orange river, which we crossed, waggon, team, etc., on a pontoon, and shortly stood upon the soil of the little African Republic. An hotel, kept by an Englishman with an unmistakable cockney accent, afforded a very fair breakfast of eggs, goat-flesh, chops, Bass, etc., and we went upon our way inwardly more comfortable.

Digitized by Google

Another long day's travel brought us, at ten o'clock at night, to the Modder river—and Mrs. Barry's hotel. Now I don't want to reflect upon the good lady's hostelry, because she is a very big woman; in fact, it is a good 'trekk' to go fairly round her, and I fancy she is well able to hold her own against most people; but I should like to insinuate gently that sleep would probably be quite as easily secured if the number of occupants of the beds was reduced a little—say a million or two to commence, so as not to make the change too striking in the beginning. The bedroom, an outside room, too, with no latch to the glass door—several panes of which absent without leave; and for sleep conducers the river rippling and brawling close at hand, the goats roaming about aimlessly, and the anticipation of some hanger-on about the premises mistaking your sleeping-apartment for his own, your clothes for his clothes, and your numerous sleeping-partners for the occupants of his place of rest. No matter, a night's a night, and must pass, and the welcome rays of the morning at five o'clock put an end to our misery, and we bade good-bye to our buxom hostess, her hotel, its beds, and other attractions. We crossed the Mod river, as it is familiarly called, after a severe struggle with our span of mules, who stuck in the middle of the drift, and required a good deal of conciliation in the shape of whips and thongs before they arrived at a unanimous conclusion to go forward.

Towards twelve o'clock we sighted a long, low string of what appeared to be tin houses glittering in the sun, and a sheet of water lying to the right, and the knowing ones said, 'There's the Pan;' and we guessed that the outlying suburb of Kimberley was in view, and in a little time we should enter the mining world, where

Digitized by Google

priceless gems rewarded with their brilliance the industry of the workers and toilers in heat and dust in the centre of a comparative desert. We rattled through Du Toits Pan, and sped away upon a red sandy track to Kimberley. A couple of bullock-carcases perfumed the air; a crowd of stores, iron houses, churches, met the view; clouds of dust everywhere; a bustling, business-like look about the people; heat and thirst its general surroundings; ox-teams, piles of merchandise, brisk market, and loads of produce—all told as plain as words could speak that we had pierced the centre of Africa's Land of Diamonds.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIAMOND FIELDS—THE STORY OF THEIR DISCOVERY—HISTORICAL RETROSPECT—SOCIAL LIFE—A DAY IN KIMBERLEY.

How shall I describe Kimberley, the capital of South Africa's Diamond Fields, so that readers afar off can form some appropriate notion of the conglomeration of peoples, dwellings, institutions, and industries that form its curious entity? How can I make that dainty beauty, upon whose snow-white hand gems in rose or brilliant cutting are sparkling and glinting forth varied beams, understand that these very gems are the outcomes of dust, dirt, oppressive heat, intense cold, hard labour, horse-power, steam-machinery, engineering skill, scientific calculation, and the hundred other points of interest grouped around those basin-like excavations known as 'Kimberley,' 'Old De Beer's,' 'Du Toits Pan,' and 'Bultfontein;' for such are the titles respectively of the diamond mines situated in what until recently was known as Griqualand West.

It is somewhat difficult to convey by means of description an adequate idea of the Diamond Fields to the mind's eye of the European reader, whose surroundings are totally at variance with those of 'the Camp,' as it is still occasionally called. One thing strikes the visitor, and it is the business-like aspect of men and things; and it is not hard to realize the truth of what

Digitized by Google

you will probably be told before you are many hours on South African soil, or many minutes in its Diamond Fields, that the discovery of the precious stones galvanized the whole of the country into life, and changed, as with a magician's wand, a general monetary depression and imminent bankruptcy into a still more general affluence and financial recovery. Yet so it was. The year 1867 was one to be well remembered by South African people: a year of extreme dearth, when rains were few, even famine stalked abroad, and money difficulties stared farmer and trader alike in the face; no loophole of escape presented itself, no means of warding off or averting even temporarily the blow which was impending over the fortunes of the country.

In this hour, when the clouds of South Africa's horizon had assumed their darkest hues, a gleam of light penetrated their depths, dispelling the gloom and opening up a brilliant vista of future prosperity—it was the discovery of the first diamond; and this is how it came about. A little child was playing 'jack-stone,' or 'odd and even,' or other infantile game wherein pebbles are used, and one of these attracted the attention of a traveller and trader, one O'Reilly, probably a foreigner, evidently Portuguese or Spanish, from the name. He offered to buy it; was told he could have it for something less than nothing. Was conscientious, and again offered; and received same reply. Cogitated, and proposed half profits in event of surmise as to value being correct. Result, qualified suggestion closed on by Niekerk, father of infant prodigy deprived of one of his playthings. O'Reilly took the stone to Colesberg, said it was a diamond, and was laughed at. Tried it on hotel window, and wrote his initials. Scoffers did likewise with piece of flint, scoring their full names, and generally enjoying

Digitized by Google

themselves at the diamond-believer's faith. O'Reilly took medical and spiritual advice; that is, he consulted a doctor and a bishop in Grahamstown, who, having diagnosed and examined the stone, pronounced it a diamond of 22½ carats. It then went to the Colonial Secretary; was examined; opinion of Medicus and Clericus endorsed; was forwarded to Hunt and Roskell, and valued by them (the Queen's jewellers) at £500.

Mr. Niekerk, the fortunate possessor of the little boy whose luxurious taste for high-class amusements led him to include a 22 carat diamond amongst his playthings, now started on a trail; he remembered having heard of a native in the vicinity, a witch-doctor, who some time before had a white stone resembling a diamond in his possession. He hunted him up and gave him, it is said, all he possessed for it. It turned out no bad bargain, for he sold it to Messrs. Lilienfeld, of Hopetown, for £11,200. It was christened by them 'The Star of South Africa,' and a star of good omen it undoubtedly was, a gem of the *first water*, 83 carats in size; and after being exhibited *en route* at the various towns it passed through, was ultimately purchased by the Countess of Dudley, and in all probability will be handed down as an historical heirloom of that family. This splendid prize stirred up the adventurous spirits throughout the country, and speculation was rife as to where the diamonds were to be found. The enterprising owners of property, here, there, and everywhere, had eminent reasons for believing that their particular patches of country were the centres of diamondiferous deposits; and even the phlegmatic Dutch Boer endeavoured in his own peculiar way to persuade the travellers with whom he came in contact that his mealie-field was probably the outer covering of an Eldorado,

Digitized by Google

and the miserable spruit, with dried-up channel which intersected his thousand *morgen* of land, hid away in its mud-caked banks 'the wealth of Ormuz or of Inde.'

In 1870, the Vaal river became a central object of interest, and on its banks camps were formed, to which names were given, and the search for diamonds was begun in earnest. Among the earliest and most successful men in the diamond-seeking industry was Mr. J. B. Robinson, one of the parliamentary representatives of Kimberley at the time I visited it, and his success in the primary stage of the River diggings proved an incitement to thousands to follow his example.

As a curious evidence of the occasional complete failure of scientific calculation, it is said that Mr. Harry Emmanuel, of London, commissioned a geological expert to visit and report on the formation, etc., of the alleged diamondiferous districts, which he did, and emphatically pronounced against them, and stated assuredly that there were no diamonds in the country. The output of diamonds since this declaration was made has been in value something over twelve millions sterling—a striking commentary on the evidence of Mr. Emmanuel's representative.

The river Vaal must have presented a very animated scene in the early days of diamond-digging; at intervals of miles, small canvas-covered towns were gathered, the ox-waggons forming the house and home of many a digger and his household gods, which he had carried with him on long 'trekks' from, perhaps, some distant parts of Cape Colony and the Free State, whilst Natal and the Transvaal added their quota to the curious human element there assembled, all animated with the one object, the desire to find the way to fortune by the quickest route. Klipdrift, Pniel, Hebron, and

Digitized by Google

Robinson, such were the names of the early camps; whilst new rushes, known as 'Gong Gong,' 'Union Kopje,' 'Blue Jacket,' 'Forlorn Hope,' kept the enterprising adventurers ever on the move.

But a greater surprise was yet in store, namely, the discovery, at the close of 1871, of what were known as the 'dry diggings.' Up to this the area of search had been confined to the banks of the river Vaal, where, in fact, nine-tenths of the digging population were assembled; but a few others, principally Dutch Boers, delved upon a couple of farms some twenty-five miles away, known as Du Toits Pan and Bultfontein. Small diamonds were found; opinions were freely expressed that it would not pay; others holding opposite ideas clung on to the work, until their success was assured. Immediately a rush took place, the proprietor of the farm, one Van Wyk, vainly strove to stem the tide of diamond-seekers, as he claimed 'one-fourth' of the finds. The diggers in a rough-and-ready way 'jumped' the claims, each representing some thirty feet square surface-ground, with unlimited depth, for which they offered the chagrined proprietor seven-and-six a month for licenses, a sum he unwillingly accepted, the Free State Government, in whose territory the farm lay, declining to interfere.

The success of the 'jumping' process at 'the Pan,' as it is now familiarly called, led to a similar experiment being carried out at Bultfontein, with, after a short struggle, an equally satisfactory result for the diggers, the farm being thrown open, claims established, and licenses, fees and charges fixed. Adjoining proprietors now began to dig, with the result that another farm, some three miles distant, the property of a Mr. De Beer, and now the mine known as 'Old De Beer's,' was declared diamondiferous; and shortly after

Digitized by Google

a prospecting party discovered diamonds upon what was called the Colesberg Kopje, subsequently the 'New Rush,' and now Kimberley, the richest diamond mine the light of day has penetrated, and which, with its surroundings, may justly be included, even in the present day, as one of the wonders of the world.

We are admittedly not a grasping people, but it is well known that the Governments of Great Britain have such naturally paternal instincts, it is not surprising that in the interests of the curious delving multitude assembled in these arid, dried-up places, a little diplomacy should be brought to bear in order to bring these rich additions to the world's wealth under the ægis of 'the flag which braves,' etc.

Two claimants appeared for the territory: the Orange Free State, and a chief of the Griquas, Waterboer by name. This latter gentleman ceded his rights to the British Government, and as his claims were probably of not the strongest character, their relinquishment was scarcely a bitter pang; and it is to be hoped that the diplomatists who negotiated the cession gave the worthy chief sufficient stimulant to make him a Rum-and-Waterboer for the remainder of his natural life. The little Dutch Republic, however, was not so easily satisfied, and naturally looked with regret at the prospect of losing so valuable a tract of territory; and in spite of the High Commissioner's proclamation that it would be an integral part of the British Empire to be known as Griqualand West, they remained obdurate claimants until 1876, when, acting on the principle of half a loaf being better than no bread, they accepted a money solatium of £90,000, and relinquished all claims on their own part, their 'heirs, administrators, or assigns.'

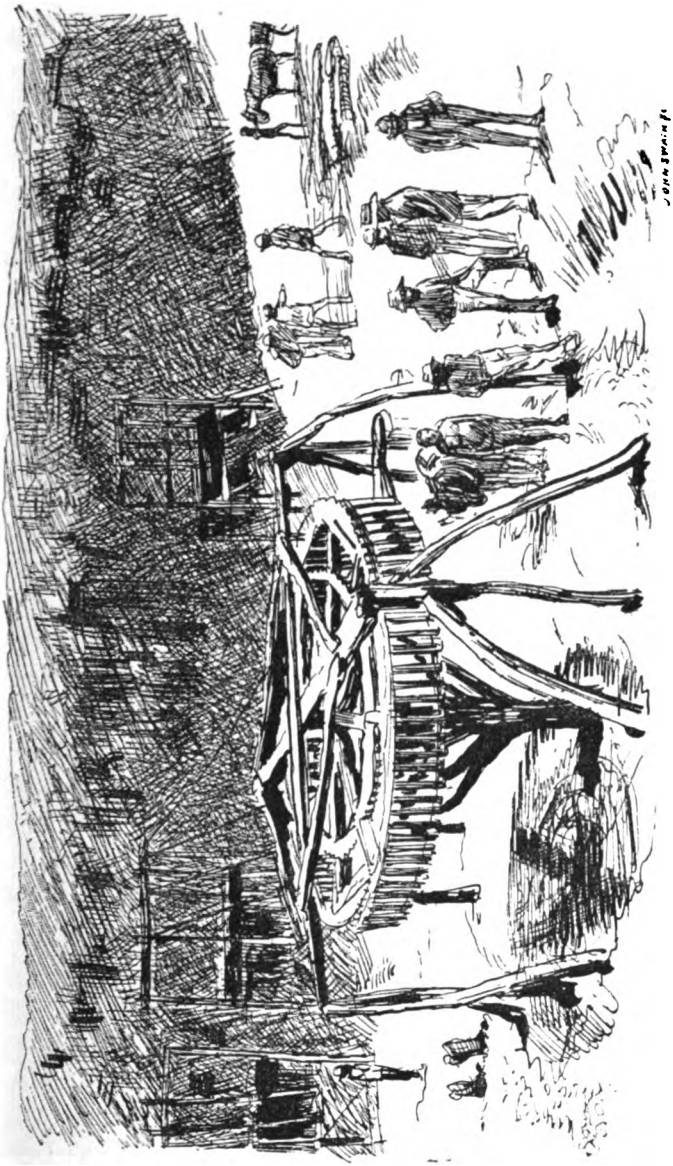
The vicissitudes of the Diamond Fields have been

Digitized by Google

remarkable: the stages they have passed through, from their early days of rude huts, tents, waggons, sheds, etc., to the present time, when handsome bank buildings, hotels, etc., of brick and stone, with some pretensions to architecture, are beginning to spring up, would require not only the pen of an historian to detail, but the space of an entire volume wherein to tell it. Suffice it to say that could some of the digging-pioneers who left during the time of the chrysalis formation of 'the Fields,' return to see the very busy bee evolved therefrom, something more than astonishment would be a very natural feeling on their part when those huge excavations were pointed out, and statistics added whose figures are as enormous as they are difficult to conceive. What would be the sensations of those whose recollection of diamond-digging was associated with a pick, a spade, and a small cradle, when informed that there is steam and other machinery around these mines to the extent of upwards of £2,000,000 in value; that the claims which in their day were 'jumped,' and paid for at the rate of ten shillings per month, or changed hands for sums varying from next-to-nothing, often given away, were sold to *bonâ-fide* purchasers for thousands of pounds, and during the recent formation of companies were transferred at prices up to as much as £25,000 per claim?

How they must open their eyes and mentally anathematize their ill-luck or want of perseverance when told of how their next-door neighbour in claims, and who held on through clouds and storms, has emerged in the light of success and basks in the sunshine of riches! And how astonished must they feel, whose remembrance of existence was a wretched insufficiency of food at

Digitized by Google



Whim, Kimberley Diamond Fields.

Digitized by Google

fabulous prices, a swamped-out tent or comfortless bullock-waggon as a place of abode, when they learn that there is now a morning market second to none in South Africa; that there are hotels, handsome stores, residential villas, and clubs where obnoxious members are duly pilled, and whose kitchen-garden supply of black beans is neither limited nor unpronounced in colour! Surely must they disbelieve the ears they hear with, or the tongues which tell them that the sales of market-produce alone represent £300,000 or £400,000 per annum; that merchandise to the extent of 25,000 tons in weight, and £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 in value, has been imported by the Diamond Fields in a twelvemonth, and this vast quantity of material carried over hundreds of miles of the poorest apologies for roads, dragged through rivers, pulled over mountains, between passes, kloofs, crossing plains of arid Karoo, waterless and treeless; the oxen dying in the yoke, and marking with their bleaching bones the track to the Golconda of South Africa! (Five hundred skeletons of bullocks have been counted between Hopetown and Kimberley, a distance of little over 100 miles.) How those eyes would be blinded, which in the early days regarded an oil-lamp as brilliancy itself, and to whom a Boer 'kerse,' or candle, was an effulgent beam, if taken to the brink of the open basin of Kimberley Mine, and treated to a view of the electric light, the swarthy forms of the dark Kaffirs throwing the blackest of shadows where their figures intercept its intense bright rays, as long after nightfall with pick and spade they continue to load up those giant buckets it will be the immediate duty of powerful steam-engines to haul to the brink of the yawning pit! A veritable El Dorado it has certainly proved to many; but the early digger

Digitized by Google

only paved the way for the shrewd capitalist and business man, who brought with him all the successful elements of tact, superior information, the assistance of machinery; and who, with his Stock Exchange ideas and general financial knowledge, directs everything from his little office, and does his digging by the proxies of overseers, Kaffir labourers, steam navvies, and horse-power.

Kimberley—and in speaking of it let it be understood I am dealing with a general description also of Du Toits Pan and Bultfontein—is built almost entirely of galvanised iron, that material having been found the most portable and useful in constructing dwelling-places in a semi-desert, where everything, even the necessaries of life, has to be conveyed by bullock-waggon or mule-trains a distance of between 300 and 400 miles. More recently bricks are being used, and in some cases stone has been brought into service; the former are manufactured by an enterprising company, who, if I mistake not, charge the handsome price of £16 per thousand for their wares. I am prepared to believe they are Israelites, and may be required to manufacture their bricks without straw, but they certainly cannot at the price be considered to do so without profit. The town is irregularly built, not having been laid out, and retains somewhat of the general jumble that must have obtained when every man selected whatever place he could to pitch his tent. After dark, without a good knowledge of your location and a fair idea of astronomy to guide you, it is no easy matter to pilot your way through the ramifications of the partially, and sometimes wholly unpaved thoroughfares of the municipality —for municipality it is, and boasts a Mayor and Corporation; the former a jolly good fellow, an Irishman,

Digitized by Google

with the name of an English county, Cornwall; and the latter equally good fellows, a term which can be applied generally to rather more than three-fourths of the Kimberleyites, and especially to those who have been resident long enough abroad to forget any narrow-minded prejudices they may have brought with them from home.

It certainly has no claims to beauty, and its comforts are—well, only to be balanced by its pecuniary profits. Space and building materials are valuable, and consequently offices and houses are small, and in summer hot, and in windy weather dusty. It has been not inaptly styled 'The city of iron dust-bins;' and it is needless to state that a dust-storm there, with so much material to feed it from the mining *débris*, is not a matter to be smiled at serenely, for it comes in whirlwinds and penetrates everywhere, rendering the pedestrian in a few minutes as white as the dusty miller of the song, and stopping the apertures of nose, eyes, and ears with small banks of sand.

A cheerful peculiarity of the galvanised iron roof in summer is that it secures as much heat during the day as lasts it half through the night, and should your bedroom window and door be on the same wall as were mine at the hotel where I sojourned, you can make up your mind to walk about the yard in your lightest of garments until such time as the falling temperature of your apartment will permit repose. I tried cold baths of half-hour duration taken externally, and tumblers of cold water taken internally, but all to no purpose; and until that relentless roof cooled off, I moved a nocturnally perturbed spirit about the circumscribed area of the hotel-yard, whose odour was anything but that of flowers—the perfume of one particular spot, where the

Digitized by Google

larder of a large sow and her diminutive litter was carefully preserved, proving a serious shock to the olfactory nerves, and I had to fall back on a box of Ozonizer, which my good friend the junior Rimmel thoughtfully handed me when I bade him a kind good-bye ere leaving for Afric's shores.

There is plenty of social life in the Diamond Fields, albeit the men are getting far too respectable in appearance, and the thin end of the wedge of civilization exhibited itself one day during my sojourn in the shape of a black-silk hat and buttoned-up frock-coat. I had already found it hard to realize that I was in the company of diamond-diggers when conversing with the well-turned-out City and Stock-Exchange-looking mortals around; but I confess that black-silk 'tile,' with an African sun at 124° blazing down upon it, suggested associations still more completely foreign to all my preconceived ideas of diamond-seekers and seeking.

There is certainly a pronounced absence of a 'devil-may-care' manner, such as might naturally be expected in a community thus formed and surrounded; rowdyism is conspicuous by its absence; and I must add, as far as my personal observation led me to form an opinion, cases of drunkenness were few, and generally of a mild form. There is a fair consumption of liquors; the heat and the dust are both factors in producing thirst, and brandies and sodas are demanded and supplied, despite the fact that a 'split' costs the consumers the respectable sum of half-a-crown. Everything is dear in Kimberley; transport varies in price from fifteen shillings per hundredweight to as much as forty shillings, and the trader and merchant has to add this to his marked prices when calculating his profits. It will be easily seen that the advent of the railway will be little

Digitized by Google

gain to him, as he will have no excuse for the excessive prices he asks, which the embargo of transport-dues entitles him to claim. Prices were ruling downwards, however, before I left Kimberley; and in drapery and other retail businesses, competition was having the beneficial effect of lowering the general charges, and in some particular instances almost assimilating them with those of Cape Town.

Hotels and churches are becoming numerous, canteens are *in*numerable; drapery stores with plate-glass window and reflector lamps are well represented; of music warehouses there are several, and the jingle of pianos is to be heard everywhere. Diamond-dealers, with their little scales and weights, look demurely out from their diminutive offices; stock and share brokers dodge about, and are equally ready to close a transaction or consume a drink; Zulu policemen, in all the glory of French képis and blue coats, patrol the dusty streets; covered carts ply for hire, or dash wildly along, with the flags of the rival auctioneers attached to them; horses for sale are led about, little banners affixed to their heads; newspapers (there are three or four of them) are hawked around; a man opens a snuff-box, you extend your hand to take a pinch and find it full of rude crystals; he tells you they are the last 'wash-up,' and worth perhaps a £1000 or more. You walk towards evening to the edge of the mine—the sun is sinking—it goes down; a bell rings loudly, and like ants from an up-turned hive ascend the Kaffir 'boys,' their day's work concluded; they straggle up in living strings, clad in the most motley garb that mind can well conceive; carelessly and cheerily they come, as though the prolonged day's work was nothing; their steps accelerate as—pish! bang!—the detonation of a dynamite charge reverberates

Digitized by Google

around the basin, clouds of dirt and stones are sent skying into the air, *débris* or reef falls inwards; another report—another—yet another: 'tis the roar of a bombardment, a bombardment where the spoils of capture are glinting diamonds, and the prisoner of war to be enchained the goddess Fortune.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIAMOND FIELDS (CONTINUED)—KIMBERLEY MINE—BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS—AMUSEMENTS—WITH THE 'SHOW'—A VISIT TO THE GAOL—ILLICIT DIAMOND BUYING—THE START FOR THE ORANGE FREE STATE.

A WONDERFUL pit is the Kimberley mine—in some places from 300 to 400 yards wide, 350 feet deep, probably 1,400 yards in circumference—and in its depths, and on its uneven sides, with pick and shovel, the work goes steadily on of deepening and expanding its cavity. It has taken nine years of labour to reach the present depth; and below the bottom surface a shaft has been sunk 160 feet, and diamondiferous ground still discovered. Three or four thousand Kaffirs of all varieties and branches of the native African races, and clad in all kinds of eccentric clothing, the cast-off tunics of the rank-and-file of the British army forming especially popular and fashionable garments, are to be seen at points of vantage digging, delving, and filling up with the precious 'blue ground' huge iron buckets, each big enough to hold three or four full-grown men, and which, when completely laden, are drawn up by powerful steam-engines. These buckets run up a wire rope with a steadiness and celerity that surprises the new-comer, who receives a decided shock as he sees their contents

Digitized by Google

suddenly toppled over on reaching the goal above. He feels somewhat reassured on learning that the curious structure into which the precious 'ground' has been summarily ejected is its receiver, and from thence 'a Scotch cart' will convey it to the 'floors,' where a certain amount of exposure to the air will sufficiently dessicate it to enable it to undergo the further process of washing, with the results of a triple sieve of stones at the bottom, in which large, medium, and small sized diamonds are respectively found. The contents of the sieves are turned out on a wooden table, and you go to work to pick out the gems. The big ones don't give you much trouble, but the smaller ones take more searching for; and it is rather a fascinating employment, especially if you are an interested claim-holder, to keep turning with a common dinner-knife the rubies and garnets, as the bulk of the stones in this residuum are called, and every now and then disclosing a white morsel like a piece of crystal, but which closer inspection tells you is a diamond.

Accepting the invitation of a wealthy claim-holder to assist at sorting a 'wash-up,' I accompanied him to where a circular tank containing a very muddy liquid was being 'puddled' by steam-machinery. An iron trap-door was unlocked, and from its depths three sieves were taken, each containing its quantum of deposit from the washing-tank. In searching for the gems it was my good fortune to discover one, apparently of considerable value, which had accidentally fallen upon the ground, and with a certain amount of *esprit*, the enthusiasm of a new worker, I triumphantly handed it to the proprietor, to be told that it was only 'bort,' a comparatively valueless species of crystal used in the polishing processes by lapidaries.

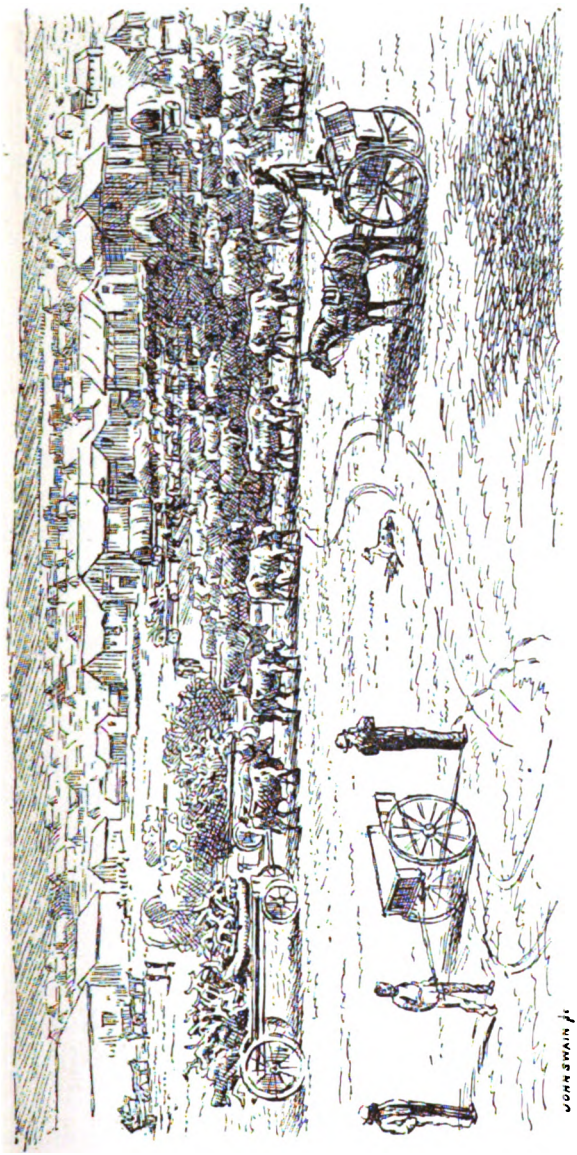
Digitized by Google

This sorting is generally supervised by a proprietor, or, where the ground is in the hands of a company, by the manager; and, in the latter case, an unlimited responsibility rests with the sorter. In my unsophisticated fancy, before it was my privilege to witness diamond-mining in reality, I had conjured up sparkling gems, stalactites of crystals, caverns where all was light and beauty, as the natural associations of such an industry; and in lieu of these I lived to learn that dust, dirt, watery mud, stones, rocks, *débris*, and ugly lumps of earth called claims, with a fierce heat in summer and piercing cold in winter, were in reality its general surroundings.

The wearing of diamonds is certainly a very ornamental matter, but the getting of them is a truly unsentimental one.

Business enterprise is really great in Kimberley, and proportionately, I should say, it enjoys a larger trade than any other town in South Africa. The morning market is quite an animated spectacle—the entire square covered with ox-waggons laden with wood or produce, chiefly brought in by Boers and British farmers. Everything is sold by auction by the market-master, and royal prices are sometimes obtained, when a dearth of any given species of market supply prevails. The ordinary price of a cabbage is from 1s. to 1s. 6d., or a 'dollar,' as the latter amount is colonially called; and there are men in Kimberley who will tell you that in the old days they have known as much as 15s. and £1 to be given for such a vegetable, while a cauliflower has reached the fancy price of 27s. 6d. Wood is increasing in price—a comparatively treeless country, and the great demand for fuel, owing to the introduction of

Digitized by Google



Kimberley Market.

Digitized by Google

steam-power on 'the Fields,' is the reason of this—and I have seen £30 given for an ox-waggon load of timber weighing about 7,000 or 8,000 lb. Should coal-prospecting in the vicinity prove successful, it will be an undoubted boon to the companies and claim-holders working in the diamond mines. The Boers bring in vegetables, karosses, mealies (maize); and in the summer, fruit; and have a market for their produce which ought, if anything can, to instil an agricultural feeling of industry into their slow-going natures. A wonderfully pious mortal is the Dutch Boer; and, apropos of the Kimberley market, a personal anecdote I may perhaps be permitted to introduce to the reader on the authority of the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, whose editor tells the story in this wise:

'A country Dutchman and a town Dutchman were standing on the market the other morning when the former inquired: "What large bills are those on the walls?" The latter replied, "They are the notices of 'Duval,' and Kimberley people go and see him every night." The countryman expressed his abhorrence of '*de duivel*,' and declared he would not witness his satanic majesty's play. The townsman then explained himself, but unfortunately added a description of the sudden metamorphoses effected by the artiste. The countryman then put down his foot and raised his hand, declaring: "*Nu veet ik dat nij der duivel is; mijn Bijbel zeg net so van hem. Ik zal nooit gaan om zu een ding te zien.*" A free translation of which is: "Now I know he is the devil; my Bible speaks of him just so. I will never go to see such a thing."'

The Boer is not as a rule a patron of amusements, as he does not care to spend more cash than he can

Digitized by Google

help; but on many subsequent occasions I had large numbers of non-English-speaking Dutchmen, their 'vrouws' and their 'kinderen,' amongst my audiences, as my experiences 'with a show through Southern Africa' led me into more remote and less-advanced centres than those of money-making, diamond-seeking Griqualand West.

A prominent place in the description of Kimberley business-life must be filled by its auctioneers and their announcements; and were it not that Pythagoras confined his theories of transmigration from the human to the lesser animals, it might be supposed that the soul of the great 'Robins' had found a congenial home in the bodies of these Diamond-Fields knights of the hammer. The principal members of the 'going! going! gone!' fraternity are Rothschild and Goodchild respectively, and who, as their names denote, are 'childlike and bland' in their demeanour, and the individual who intends to instruct these two gentlemen upon any point connected with their business that they are not already acquainted with, will set himself a somewhat superfluous task and necessitate his cultivation of particularly early rising as a prominent habit. They were partners, but are now at daggers-drawn—I mean hammers raised—as far as business is concerned, and vie with each other in their wonderful announcements; though I must confess for brilliant colouring and perfervid imaginative powers, those of the worthy 'Baron,' as he does *not* object to be called, carry off the palm.

What do you think, my reader, of the following specimen of his heroic style of appealing to the patriotism of purchasers in the matter of the sale of an

Digitized by Google

officer's uniform, the announcement displayed in the boldest type, and resembling a wall-placard more than a newspaper advertisement?

ISANDHLWANA.

Siste, viator, heroem calcas.

['*DIAMOND NEWS.*']

Go tell the Spartans, thou that passest by,
That here, obedient to their laws, we lie.

['*DIAMOND NEWS.*']

WITH great admiration, and deep-felt sympathies, for those that fell on the battle-field of Isandhlwana last year, the Auctioneer of Kimberley has been requested to sell,

This Day, Saturday,

AT 12 O'CLOCK,

The Uniform of the late Major Stewart Smith, who fell in the act of spiking the Guns captured by the Zulus.

I see before me the Major lie;
He leans upon his hand his manly brow,
Consents to Death, but conquers agony,
And his droop'd head sinks gradually low,
And through his side the last drops ebbing slow.

AT 12 O'CLOCK.

A. A. Rothschild, Auctioneer.

Digitized by Google

Or this, as a sample of the playfully truthful :

WELLS, WATERCARTS,

SCOTCH-CARTS, HORSES,

AND

RESIDENCE,

FOR SALE WITHOUT RESERVE.

IT was blowing like old boots in Kimberley; the air was hot and sultry, and Water was scarce, very scarce indeed, every body looked blue and down in the mouth; the bugle sounded and informed expectants that the English Mail had arrived, and soon a crowd surrounded the various Delivery Boxes, and amongst others Mr. E. BODEN'S handsome face and tall figure was seen. After half-an-hour's patience and the loop-holes were opened, when was heard eagerly asked,—Any letters, for SMITH, BROWN, &c.? Any letters for EDWIN BODEN? Yes, a registered one, come round and sign. When he heard this a smile,—aye, more than a smile, settled upon his fine Scotch features. He went and signed, got the letter, opened it, and broke-out in a most joyful Scotch glee, and at last he said,—'I am off, off to the auld country.' I shall go and tell

MR. A. A. ROTHSCHILD,

AUCTIONEER, &c., TO SELL, &c.

These are positively mild specimens of the descriptive genius of Rothschild, who possesses a marvellous sparkle, verve, and energy—in and out of his rostrum—and is besides a man of cultivated intelligence and accomplishments. The other 'child,' the 'Good' one, is composed of heavier metal, and is more of a 'slogger,' to use a prize-ring term, delivering heavy body blows, and going more methodically to work than his volatile rival. But the business got through by each is enormous; and they are equally ready to sell anything, from claims at fabulous prices, spanking blood thorough-

Digitized by Google

breds or stylish equipages, down to rickety bedsteads, spavined 'whim' horses, or broken-down Cape-carts, with wheels warranted to come off before you get half a dozen miles on your journey down.

Amusements in Kimberley are more or less restricted to the theatre, the rink—for wheel-skates have made their way here—an occasional visit of a circus, a few singing-rooms, the billiard-saloons, and club-houses. Very little outward gambling is seen, though *sub rosa* in social circles it is a recognised institution, and large sums have been known to change hands in private houses, where play was comparatively unlimited and stakes were high.

The Theatre Royal, wherein I gave twenty performances, is nothing more than a large hall, composed chiefly of galvanised iron. Its roof being entirely of this material, when the summer rain descends an unintermitting and relentless patter prevails, and vain is the attempt of singer or speaker to make the voice heard over the obnoxious din produced. Had old Demosthenes been exhumed by some enterprising digger in his search for gems, he could have improved on that experiment which classic historians tell us was his wont, of addressing the roaring waters of the ocean, in an endeavour to make himself understood above its murmurs, as he would those of a multitude of people; the roof of Kimberley theatre, in a semi-tropical rain shower, would have made the old man offer a stout reward for the loan of a speaking-trumpet.

Apropos of the theatre, the class of audiences to be met with in 'the Fields' are, as a rule, marvels of deportment; noise and rowdyism are conspicuous by their absence when the materials offered for their amusement are of a kind they appreciate. Most of the present

Digitized by Google

residents of 'the Fields' are people of European cities, or who have travelled and seen the current amusements of the day; and I was a listener at a high-class concert, performed chiefly by amateurs of Kimberley, that not only gratified but astonished me. I had scarcely hoped to find such an exhibition of cultivated taste so far away, and in what I had been led to believe was a mining-camp. I may further add that taste, indicative of refinement, is visible in the furnishing of numbers of the residences, the little villas of the Kimberleyites, whose owners have spared no expense to bring around them not only the comforts but elegancies of their European homes. Attempts at tree-planting and incipient shrubberies are made, the progress of which want of water greatly retards; but this difficulty must yield eventually before the successful issue of the 'Water Scheme,' a project for bringing the Vaal River supply in pipes a distance of some sixteen miles, and the inception of which is due to the perseverance of a popular Irishman, Chevalier Lynch, or 'Tom,' as his friends love to call him; and upon whose efforts it is to be hoped Fortune will smile. Water is still a scarce commodity, though the increased well-supply has diminished considerably the drought-prices of the olden days, when a man used a couple of bottles of soda-water at one shilling each to wash himself, in lieu of a bucket of the more costly well-supply at a crown. At the Queen's Hotel, where I stayed—and whose excellent landlady, Mrs. Jardine, a braw Scotswoman, will ever be a central figure for genuine goodness and kindliness when the history of 'the Fields' comes to be written—they were paying when I was there five shillings for a barrel of water, and not a very large-sized barrel either.

Digitized by Google

A route through the Orange Free State being selected, it became necessary to arrange for conveyance; and deciding upon having my own vehicle, and setting coach-proprietors at defiance, I began looking round for a suitable equipage and horseflesh to draw it. When it became known that I was in the market for such commodities, the number of teams bearing striking resemblance to each other that were offered (by Malays principally) was remarkable. Their method was strikingly ingenious: a covered Cape-cart, capable of holding about six persons, was rattled up, drawn by four bays, the merits of which were privately whispered by a sort of interlocutor; the price, say £130, asked, and declined. In a quarter of an hour another cart and driver, with a team suspiciously like the former ones, dashed up to the hotel, and were offered at £120; to be followed at intervals by similar teams, the price ranging much about the same, but ruling slightly downwards on failure of sale.

The sturdy auctioneer Goodchild was wielding his hammer and exercising his lung-powers one morning in the endeavour to secure bidders for a fifteen-seated covered-coach, strong, light, with lively springs, and already attached to four horses. It struck me the golden opportunity had arrived to secure the suitable conveyance to carry me 'with a show through Southern Africa;' and as the competition was not animated the coach-and-four became mine for the reasonable sum of £180. Two other grey horses cost £44 more, and with additional harness and alterations, etc., say another £16. The whole turn-out was under £250, and might be considered very reasonable according to current prices at that time obtainable in the Diamond Fields, the more so as the coach, or waggon—the term most in

Digitized by Google

vogue—was nearly new. Horse-keeping in South Africa is at times an exceedingly expensive luxury, but the equines in these climates eat gladly that which their more pampered and aristocratic brethren in England would only condescend to lie upon ; as, for instance, bundles of oat-sheaves, known as 'forage,' which they devour, straw and ears alike. This forage, in bundles averaging 3½ lb. to 5 lb. weight, varies in price from a shilling to as much as half-a-crown, the latter an exceptional price. The first driver I had engaged took upon himself to tool my waggon and horses, with a party of his friends for company, to Alexandrefontein, the Kimberley swell drive—a beautiful bit of arid desert, wherein doth sprout a galvanised iron house, whose principal claim to being called an 'hotel' is from the fact that intoxicants are obtainable at its 'bar.' As I had given no permission for my vehicle to be turned into a 'Sunday-out' conveyance, I summarily dismissed the groom, having secured in his place a very dark 'Cape Town boy,' a species of mixed breed in which the St. Helena negro figures prominently. This innocent youth rejoiced in the scriptural appellation of 'Samson,' and was attired in a broad-leaved white hat with a mauve scarf wound round the crown ; his skin was very black and his teeth very white, and he had a large amount of evident jauntiness in his disposition. I gave him a sovereign to go and buy two long bamboo whip-sticks, and he went upon his way, not to slaughter the Philistines, but to trade with the Israelites, as the whip-stick vendor was a distinguished ornament of that large section of the chosen people to be met within the precincts of 'the Fields.' The non-return of Samson suggested that the Israelite was more difficult to move than the gates of old; so, impelled by curiosity,

Digitized by Google

I went down to seek out the cause of his prolonged absence. The explanation was soon obtained from the juvenile son of the whip-stick vendor, who said, 'Mr. Kennedy took Samson to the Tronk'—the Dutch term for those well-ordered establishments whose residents are never allowed to sleep out at night or keep irregular hours. I sought the 'Tronk' to make further search; and while waiting to learn the result of the inquiries, was shown through the prison by the deputy-governor, Mr. Healy, a most obliging official, who pointed out sundry and various chiefs and leaders of native wars and rebellions—Griquas, Gaikas, Zulus, Corrannas, etc., possessing the most unpronounceable names and unprepossessing countenances. My guide said most of them would rather stay than leave, and wouldn't have their freedom if they got it; and I felt another of my cherished idols, the idea that liberty was a glorious feeling innate even in the savage breast, had received a severe shock. In one cell were five natives, one a petty chief, quietly awaiting the most dreaded sentence of the law. The best-looking of the party had murdered some Kaffir woman, possibly his mother-in-law, and was to be pitied; the others had been convicted of the more serious crime of sedition, and extenuating circumstances could not well be suggested in their case. The debatable ground of how the black man should be treated has been fought over and over again; and the practical opinions of colonists and the abstract theories of telescopic philanthropists have clashed together in many a fray. The theories of each party appear to be extreme, and the colonial anti-Kaffir does as much harm by his ill-treatment of the native races as the Exeter Hall sympathiser who pets and persuades the intelligent Basuto that he is as good as, if not better than,

Digitized by Google

his white-skinned brother. The fund for converting the 'Choctaws of Passamaquoddy' will wait long before it engages much general sympathy amongst African colonists, and they have reasonable grounds upon their side for their antagonistic feelings; but the justice of trying and condemning semi-barbarous Kaffirs by civilised laws for resistance to authority they can scarcely be expected to understand, is quite a matter open to question—reflections which the sight of that knot of condemned men waiting their end with the most stoical indifference suggested more than once during my patrol of Kimberley Gaol. However, there is the pleasant reflection of being a thoroughly Christian and well-governed people, despite the fact that the red tape of judicial office does get sometimes spun out into the hempen cord of the hangman. Kimberley Gaol is well arranged—would that its post-office were likewise!—fairly well ventilated, clean, and comfortable, though all its buildings are of the one-story uniform height prevailing in the town. Prior to leaving I viewed the prison photographic album, in which were enshrined the portraits of a number of ladies and gentlemen who had temporarily resided there. Only white prisoners are photographed; the 'niggers,' I presume, are considered too much alike to discover, as they say in Yorkshire, 't'other from which.' The principal white prisoners are those who have been convicted of I.D.B., which cabalistic letters translated mean 'illicit diamond buying,' a fascinating species of occupation much in vogue on 'the Fields,' and very remunerative when not followed by treadmill exercise, oakum-picking, and geological research. I recognised in one gentleman engaged in geological studies, assisted by a flint hammer, a well-known broker whom I had several times seen an occupant of my stalls at the

Digitized by Google

theatre, and whose former irreproachable white shirt-front, rings, studs, and faultless evening suit marked a decided contrast to the moleskin trousers, grey jacket, and hob-nailed shoes he was wearing, and whose only ornaments were broad arrows and numerals; his last negotiation in diamonds with unauthorised dealers having proved a 'trap' into which he had fallen for five long weary years.

Such is the law of diamond dealing in 'the Fields,' that only those licensed to sell, and those with similar permits to buy, can trade in the uncut precious stones; and all transactions have to be entered and registered. That these laws are evaded daily, one might say hourly, there is no doubt; nor is there any second question as to the actual dishonesty of buying illicitly. But despite this fact, a considerable section of people are to be met who, in an off-hand manner, say, 'Ah, poor So-and-so was run in last night;' 'Jack Blank was trapped this morning, poor beggar!' and though I cannot believe, as is sometimes broadly stated, that the illicit trade is universal, there is much in these sympathetic expressions to suggest 'a fellow-feeling' that 'makes us wondrous kind.' Further, there are examples of persons engaged in business and trade who have served their time, paid their fines, and are now well-to-do in their particular occupations; nor does, apparently, the same stigma attach to these enterprising speculators that would to an ordinary felon, upon whom society would immediately turn its back, and gathering its robes of virtue and honesty around it, pass over on the other side.

There is a class who inveigh in most emphatic terms against the I.D.B.'s, and these are the 'diggers,' the men from whose claims the diamonds are stolen; but rumour says that ere now many diggers, stifling their

Digitized by Google

virtuous indignation, have found it much more profitable to buy illicitly than to work their ground. It is not a pleasant reflection that the man you are dining with to-day, may exchange his capital spread and guinea a bottle champagne for mealie-meal porridge and skim-milk to-morrow, with a prospect of continuing that species of frugal repast for a period that seems remote in its futurity.

Having viewed the kitchen, tasted 'mealie-meal pap,' and done a turn on the treadmill, at the suggestion of my guide I signed the visitor's book; and reader, if you should ever enter Kimberley Tronk, whether as a visitor or as the result of a quiet little transaction of a parcel of pure whites, straws, or off-colours, 'hark back' in the list of names contained in that magic volume, and you will find my opinions of its comforts fully expressed; and I can but reiterate them by saying that had I not arranged to travel 'with a show through Southern Africa,' I should have liked to remain and live there.

No news of Samson? Good-bye, Mr. Healy. Thanks for your courtesy, and try and disabuse Major Maxwell's mind of that implicit faith of his in Zulu prisoners, or he may lose another thoroughbred South African Veld springer, like the one the 'boy' rode out to exercise, and which returned no more.

Oh, Samson's in the police cells, is he? Let us hope he won't pull the walls down before I have a chance of extracting that sovereign I too confidingly placed in his swarthy palm!

True enough, there he lay extended on face and hands, and after being considerably stirred up by the attendant Zulu policeman, he stated that he was 'run in' for attempted desertion, and to explain this I must digress once more.

Digitized by Google

When a coloured man engages as a servant at 'the Fields,' he agrees for a given period of time, and is duly registered at the town office; and should he behave badly during his term, or attempt to run away, he is amenable to the law, and liable to punishment. This was a case in point; Samson being another man's servant, a fact he pertinaciously concealed from me when offering his service.

Leaving him to his remorse, or more probably to sleep it out, I hastened to secure a substitute, and on the recommendation of 'Fred Jacobs,' a well-known horsey character of 'the Fields,' I got another 'Samson' minus the 'son.' 'Sam' had less name and colour than his predecessor, but was none the less 'Cape Town'—a species of breed in which vice, sloth, and ingratitude are prominent characteristics.

Well, we're fairly on the move at last. Baggage packed, horses inspanned, Sam engaged splicing a bit of thin hide to the end of his lash; Fry has got the ribbons gripped; the word is given to loose the leaders, when in jumps a young fellow who has been *soi-disant* barman of the theatre saloon, and having already put his portmanteau on the waggon, insists upon also coming himself. Well, if we must we must; bundle in here! this is a country where every man should help the other. Give 'em their heads. Good-bye, Coney. Good-bye, Jack. Let 'em have it, Sam—and away we go down 'the Pan' road, our new voyageur, 'Phillips,' explaining as we race along that, having had a turn at ostrich-farming, diamond-digging, and bar-keeping, he was anxious to complete his education by a few experiences 'with a show through Southern Africa.'

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

BOSHOF—ON THE 'TREKK'—TRAVELLING EXPERIENCES IN THE FREE STATE—CAMPING OUT—CROSSING THE MODDER RIVER—BULLOCK WAGGON TRANSIT—BLOEMFONTEIN.

LEAVING Kimberley and all its dust and diamonds behind us, rattling through Du Toit's Pan, its salt lake glittering in the sun, waving adieux to the Bultfonteiners in return for those liberally signalled from stores, offices, and canteens, we strike a track which is intimated as the road to Boshof; and in half an hour's time the galvanised iron city with its assemblage of mammon-worshippers is lost to view. Night falls; we break a trace—it is mended; we break another—more splicing; and then a swingle-bar becomes *hors de combat*. This is a foretaste of the luxuries of travel afforded by South African roads.

At nine o'clock we reached 'Harveys'—so called from the fact of the proprietor being one Jones or Smith. Whether his name was Smith or Jones is open to question, but there is none as to his somnolent powers, as it took the united efforts of all the members of our party to rouse him up; but having done so, he responded at once in the matter of forage and liquor, moving about in the shadowy apparel said to be in vogue amongst ghosts, though why those residents of

Digitized by Google

the spirit-world should only affect what is generally known as a night-gown for their evening dress I have ever been at a loss to understand.

Next day, late in the afternoon, we reached Boshof, a quiet little town of true Dutch complexion, and where a retired athlete, who once struck terror into observers' hearts by his bold trapeze flights in mid-air, regaled the same public at a by no means bad hostelry, which, called after himself, was known as Diaz's Hotel. This was my first experience 'with a show' in the smaller towns of Southern Africa, and it was unique. To all intents and purposes you might have fired a howitzer loaded with grape-shot through any of the streets or squares of the town without injuring anybody. The population, if there was such a thing—no sign of life being apparent—like moles in winter, were well out of sight. The place for public amusements, meetings, etc., was the 'Magistraatie Kantoor,' or Court House—an empty room, save and except a platform and a couple of tables and chairs, which formed the magisterial furniture. This difficulty, the want of seats, I found was rapidly being got rid of, intending auditors sending their Kaffir servants loaded with chairs to the hall; mine host Diaz, true to his showman's instincts, having opened a 'plan of stalls,' which for the size of the town was wonderfully well filled up. Night brought the audience, and wonder upon wonder grew as they arrived, summoned by a huge bell attached to the Court House, nearly all figged out in the glories of evening dress; Miss Kaatje blooming with real flowers in her hair, and Dirk and Piet in the proud magnificence of swallow-tails and lavender kids. Their gorgeousness, however, did not interfere with their enjoyment, for whether they understood the points or not, they laughed

Digitized by Google

consumedly, and came the next evening, and did likewise all over again.

Having got a new swingle-bar, and a few other necessaries for the road, we started at sunrise, or rather at the time it should have risen, 'on the trekk' for Bloemfontein, the capital of the little Republic known as the Orange Free State.

The first 'outspan' was at a Dutch farm; our quondam fellow-voyager Phillips proving his expressed ability to 'rough it' by a little *al-fresco* cooking—a pleasant enough system in fine weather, with plenty in the larder and fuel proportionate. Without much incident we pushed along until the afternoon, preserving a steady travelling pace of six to seven miles an hour, the horses being 'outspanned,' or unyoked, fed and watered, every two and a half hours—these being Draconic laws in the matter of South African travelling. At five in the evening the weather began to look threatening, huge banks of cloud looming up, and every appearance of a thunderstorm in prospective. A sage Hottentot at a post-cart station advised us to remain, but as the Modder river was but an hour and a half ahead of us, disregarding his warning we pushed on. The ground was heavy with previous rains, and the horses, fagged out by the long 'trekk' and heavy road, at last wheeled off the path into the open 'Veld,' and refused to budge an inch. While arguing the point with the refractory animals, the storm began its preliminary patter; and in a few minutes, night having fallen, the whole of the heavens seemed radiated with streaks of vivid lightning. There we were, Sam at the leaders' heads, Fry and Phillips standing in mud up to their knees twisting the wheels, myself holding the reins, and vigorously plying a short whip on the leaders' flanks; the rain drenching,

Digitized by Google

the wind becoming every instant fiercer in its blasts, and the lightning-flashes absolutely blinding in their intensity, as every moment they lit up the scene, to an accompaniment of rattling thunder, which seemed ear-splitting in its reverberations. Perhaps as a novel condition, that thunderstorm on the 'Veld' made a greater impression upon me than subsequent ones; but the recollection of its surroundings; the streams of fire that seemed descending at every point of the horizon; the possibility of the waggon being struck at any instant; the pleasurable reflection that for ten miles around no human habitation might be found; the struggles of the half-frightened horses; the imprecations of the men—all went to make up a scene which made an indelible mark upon my recollection it will take much to efface.

Giving up the war with the horses as futile, we 'outspanned' them and tied them to the waggon, into which, wet to the skin, bedraggled, and mud-bespattered, we bipeds huddled, and thanked our guardian angel for the 'three-star' bottles its boot contained, and the shelter its canvas roof and curtains afforded. And thus we spent the night, snatching such broken sleep as a sitting posture and wet clothes afforded; the horses severely shaking the waggon every time we began to nod off, in their endeavours to break away and flee from each renewed blast of the storm.

Morning arrived and renewed the battle royal with the horses, who, stiff and cold from the night's exposure, exhibited little inclination to proceed upon their way. A couple of hours were wasted in futile endeavours to induce them to move, in the struggles of which the harness was broken and tied up half a dozen times. They went ultimately, and when least expected to do so, and in the course of three-quarters of an hour we

Digitized by Google

came to the Modder river, which was what is called, colonially, 'down,' but which to the raw Briton would appear very considerably 'up.' These South African rivers are marvels, sometimes showing a dry bed, or at most the merest trickle of water; then, after a few hours' rain, rushing madly along, swelling over their highest banks, and spreading out into miniature lakes, rising seventy feet from their normal bed in but a few hours' time, and sometimes falling again equally rapidly. Such was the condition of the 'Mod,' as it is familiarly called, when we reached its banks; and a suitable place, near a few mimosa thorns, having been chosen, we prepared to camp until such time as the river should subside and render the use of its drift practicable.

On the other side of 'Truter's Drift,' as the ford was called, we saw a house, which we learned was an hotel, where one Lindsay, a Scotsman 'frae Aberdeen awa,' supplied necessaries to the numerous 'transport riders' and travellers between Bloemfontein and 'the Fields.' There was a means of communication over the river, in the shape of a box slung on a rope running on a sort of pulley-wheel, and Phillips succeeded in making the passage and returning with supplies—accompanied the last time by the Scotsman, who brought a friendly offering—a large live goose—which was afterwards served up from a three-legged pot, its appetising fumes arising like the incense of a sacrificial offering to the god who presides over the *cuisine*.

Three days having passed of this kind of agreeably lazy camp-life—living, eating, sleeping in open air, a roaring fire nocturnally illuminating our bivouac—and the 'Mod' river showing no signs of subsidence, I gave the order to have all the baggage conveyed across in the slung box, having previously 'squared' the owner of a

Digitized by Google

bullock-waggon delayed at the opposite bank to convey my party to Bloemfontein. I dare say few of the readers of this book ever crossed a brawling, surging South African river in a slung box and on a wire rope. If they have, it will need no description of mine to recall their sensations as with a whirr and a rush they went down the incline produced by their weight on the single line that life depended on, nor the peculiar climbing effect of the pull up the other side, after a temporary halt midway—the steam-power (*i.e.*, Kaffirs) pulling like grim death at the hauling-gear until, the cross-trees reached, out safely the passengers stepped on *terra firma* once more. Such was the method by which our goods, chattels, and ourselves were conveyed across the Modder river at Truter's Drift.

Sam, the waggon, and horses were left to wait such time as the stream should become passable; and, settling ourselves as comfortably as we could in a rather primitive bullock-waggon, we started fairly on the way to the capital of the 'Orange Vrie Staat,' as its burghers love to call it. Bullock teams work best at night for two reasons—the absence of oppressive heat from the sun, and the day being their legitimate time for feeding. I have often seen bullocks refuse to graze at early morning, though, from the time they had been in the yoke, one might have supposed famine had set in; but no, they waited patiently until the sun had dried the dew from the herbage, and then quietly commenced laying in a store of materials whereon to 'chew the cud' of their 'sweet or bitter' grasses, for the 'Veld' of Southern Africa supplies both of these for the delectation of bovine palates.

The principal features of the country from the Modder river to Bloemfontein consist of long rolling plateaus

Digitized by Google

covered thinly with meadow-grasses, and thickly with red, lumpy ant-hills. A most industrious insect is the South African ant, and his abodes are to be seen spotted over the 'Veld' in myriads. He is ingenious, persevering, and warlike. I once saw a large clumsy beetle attacked by a swarm of ants, and it was a most interesting struggle. The beetle, by sheer force of his strength and weight, would shake off his assailants and start for an aperture of escape; but ere he covered an inch or two of ground his enemies were again around him, and, clinging to legs, back, head, feelers, anywhere and everywhere a clutch could be obtained, impeded his progress, and as often as he freed himself returned to the attack, till Master Beetle became feebler and feebler in his defence, and eventually succumbed to his active and persevering enemies. The whole fight formed a vivid parallel to the late Zulu War, where a numerous and active enemy showed how dangerous was the celerity of their movements when pitted against the strong, slow-going, baggage-hampered, commissariat-deadlocked, red-tape-throttled British army beetle, who in no slight measure had to thank the actual courage of his foes for giving him the chance of inflicting serious loss upon them.

Bloemfontein! Where? There! So it is; but at present represented by an outlying galvanised iron house, and a dam of water. Twenty-four hours of a springless ill-covered bullock-waggon, whose 'tent' is so dilapidated that to prevent being wet through in the night we had to open our umbrellas, is about enough, and the sight of the iron hut is calculated to induce a thankful state of mind. Push on to the 'Bloemfontein Hotel,' and see what mine host 'Charlie Moss' can do to repair the wear and tear of the previous day and

Digitized by Google

night. We found we had been expected at the announced date, but it is nothing new for people travelling in South Africa to be behind the time of their appointment, the exigencies of travelling difficulties are universally admitted and understood.

The Orange Free State, of which Bloemfontein is the capital, owes its origin to the exodus of Dutch population from the Cape Colony in 1837. Abolition of slavery was the primary cause of the movement of these 'trekk Boers,' and dissatisfaction generally with the subsequent native policy of the British Government aided it. They sold off their farms for whatever they would bring, and some seven thousand of them crossed the Orange river, into the comparatively unknown district immediately beyond. Some moved on to Natal; others settled on the wide plains of what is now the Free State, where for a time they were left unmolested.

In 1845, difficulties having arisen between these settlers and a native tribe, the Griquas, an opportunity offered for the British Government to interfere, but not until three years later did any active measures supervene. Then, however, Sir Harry Smith, after a fight known as the battle of Boomplaats, announced the British sovereignty over all the newly settled country, which resulted in large numbers of the Boers moving still farther northwards, and crossing the Vaal river, to found the Transvaal Republic. Six years later the sovereignty established by Sir Harry Smith was abandoned, not without leaving traces visible to the present time in the English names of streets, language used in conversation, etc., no British person feeling away from home in the capital of this little Dutch Republic. With varied fortune it has quietly progressed, much of its success being due to the very great wisdom of rule and discre-

Digitized by Google

tion exhibited at all times of its difficulty and danger by President Brand, who for close on twenty years has held the helm of the little barque 'Republic,' and has faithfully discharged the double duties of pilot and steersman. He is a Cape Colony man by birth, was trained for, and became successful at the Colonial bar; has now the respect of all shades and classes of South African politicians, even of those whom, for want of a better title, I may venture to call Dutchophobes, and his motto, '*Alles zal recht kommen*' ('All will come right'), is the best index to a character in which calmness and a firm regard for justice seem equally blended. While at Bloemfontein it was my privilege to have an interview with President Brand, and his entirely modest demeanour and quiet affability were a very marked contrast to a large number of British officials with whom I have come in contact in the course of a somewhat eccentric career. Under the President is the Volksraad, a body of elected representatives, who assemble in a very commodious Government building, and in which, as the Boer is not oratorically developed, the business of the House is probably expeditiously transacted. This, however, is merely surmise on my part, as the weight of evidence is against it, for the simple reason that the Volksraad members are paid during such time as the Raad is sitting; and as their habits are inexpensive, a prolonged debate means financial profit. The white and black population of the Free State by late returns is estimated at 115,000; the natives or coloured races are not more than a third of that number. The Boers have a decided method of solving the native question, which might act like an electric shock upon the telescopic philanthropists of Exeter Hall. The Free State possesses a Supreme Court, with one Chief and two Puisne Judges,

Digitized by Google

and District Magistrates for the administration of justice. Roman Dutch law obtains here exclusively, and almost throughout South Africa is more or less used. The Free State Judges are thoroughly able men; I shall want to travel a considerable distance, and jostle very many men combining the elements of refined tastes, *bonhomie*, and other attributes that go to make up the superior orders of mankind, before I shall meet the peer of at least one of them, now the Recorder of Kimberley, of whose genial disposition and courtesy I have the liveliest recollection.

Bloemfontein takes for its motto '*Mens sana in corpore sana*,' boasting its schools for the first and its climate for the second. It stands high, has a dry atmosphere, a good market supply, capital hotels, two newspapers, lots of churches, and numerous educational establishments. Without doubt its claim to being a place where superior education can be obtained is based upon higher grounds than merely the number of its schools—it is their class; and you have the Grey College, and the Dames Institute where the Dutch rising youth of both sexes receive tutelage, as also a Catholic convent, with real nuns, and a Protestant high church ditto with—well, very much the same thing, where more English and less Dutch is instilled. 'The Convent,' that of the Holy Family, was established by the Catholic Bishop, Dr. Jolivet; 'The Home' is the product of the Protestant ditto, Dr. Webb. There does not appear to be much difference in their style, except that the latter has more of the mediæval Catholic about it, with a sort of amateur pontifical veneer that suggests its flirtation with Catholicism has been marked in results.

My entertainments here were some half dozen in

Digitized by Google

number, including a Literary Evening with the Scientific Society, for Bloemfontein boasts a charmed circle for the cultivation of superior knowledge, and whose appreciation I esteemed much more than that which my lighter forms of 'show bizness' evoked; and it was with a real feeling of regret that I learned the time of our departure was made manifest in the arrival of Sam and the waggon after ten days' delay at the river drift. It appeared that even then the waggon had to be buoyed with empty barrels and floated across the stream, the horses obligingly swimming over in answer to a talismanic, innate conviction that chopped 'forage' of unstinted supply awaited their arrival on the opposite shore. This is no uncommon method of crossing rivers during an 'up country' tour of Southern Africa, and much in vogue with post-cart contractors, with whom time means money, and who cannot afford to wait the falling tide of the too often swollen streams. Transport riders often vegetate on the banks of a 'drift' for weeks together, until the river runs down to its normal level and permits the utilizing of its ford for passage.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

ON THE 'TREKK—MORE TRAVELLING ENJOYMENTS—FAURESMITH—JAGERSFONTEIN—PHILLIPOLIS—COLESBERG—HANOVER—SPRINGBOK SHOOTING—MIDDLESBURG—ECONOMISING TIME.

'VORWARTZ!' was the motto of sturdy old Blucher, and adopting the saying of the Prussian general, again we started 'on the trekk' through Southern Africa. Fauresmith, the object-town of our next move, is distant about seventy or eighty miles from Bloemfontein—it is very difficult to quote distances accurately in describing South African travels, as there is little or no system of milestones or marks to guide the traveller. Distance is measured by hours, and no two persons appear to agree as to the amount of time required for a given journey, inasmuch as the relative pace of horses, species of conveyances, and modes of travelling vary so much, that forming anything like an accurate idea is not only difficult but often impossible. You meet a transport rider moving slowly along with his bullock-waggon, and he will probably tell you in answer to your query as to how far it is to Fauresmith, that it will take him four days to accomplish the distance; while the post-cart driver, whose movements are comparatively express-train-like in rapidity, says 'A short day and a half;' and the Kaffir tramping the road will probably say 'Very far,' and pantomime with any amount of gesture his

Digitized by Google

ideas of measurement. But whether it is an hour or a week, with the wretched 'Veld' tracks that serve as roads not only through the Free State, but in parts of South Africa with more pretentious forms of government, the distances are surely long enough; and in bad weather it is no exaggeration to say that he who travels by horse-waggon or Cape cart, does so at the possible risk of fractured bones or dislocated neck. In dry seasons the dangers are minimised, and I have spent many a pleasant day rolling along over the boundless 'Veld,' or viewing it from the saddle of a real Dutch 'paard,' whose Boer training exhibits itself in an untiring canter, or, easiest movement in equitation, a 'triple.'

The afternoon of the second day brought us with one horse dead lame to a Boer house, the 'Baas' of which, through his better-half, kindly proffered his hospitality, which was duly accepted. He showed me a strong-looking, rather fresh horse, price £21; said I could leave my lame one till I wanted him. I demurred, said I would reflect till morning, and sang him the chorus of 'The Little Wee Dog' in a very free Cape Dutch translation. Its marvellous effect, however, was electrical, and the negotiation in horse-flesh resulted in my taking his gallant bay at a reduction of £6 next morning.

A very simple and, in most cases, well-meaning and hospitable people, the African Dutch have had many of these originally good qualities spoiled by passing travellers by the abuses to which they have been subjected, the more so since the diamond discovery attracted to South African regions a fair amount of the British population who, as a representative class, can scarcely be said by their bearing and manners to shed lustre upon the land of their birth, or pleasure on that of

Digitized by Google

their adoption. These natural prejudices did not interfere with Mynheer Liebenberg and his 'Vrow,' who, understanding English, was the medium of explaining some of my efforts to excite her 'Baas' into risibility. It was not a difficult matter; very little humour set him well off. We sang songs alternately—that is, I sang songs; his musical repertoire was confined to Dutch hymns, which he warbled with the lungs of a Stentor, and with which he succeeded in keeping his 'end up' in the programme, a German concertina affording a magnificent accompaniment.

We crossed the Riet river next day, and mounted the other bank, aided by a span of oxen, the horses being unable to pull up the sandy drift, and camped at night near a rather swell Boer farm. No forage or bread to be had; so a friendly Kaffir's offer of goats'-milk was accepted; the boys made some flour-and-water cakes they called 'slap-jacks,' and we had a good time generally.

Three rivers were crossed next day; and in the afternoon, when but a short distance from Fauresmith, we encountered a fierce storm, accompanied by hail, thunder, and lightning, and another miserable night in the waggon was a consequent. Fry and Sam, who had taken the horses with them to search for a farm near, did not return till next day, when the former, attired in a full suit of Boer's clothes, came riding up with bread, eggs, and other supplies from a farm where they had spent the night, having fallen into several sluits and rivulets during the storm before he discovered the house of the good-natured farmer in whose gear he was then luxuriating. The supplies were most acceptable, as, having run out of bread-stuffs, we had been compelled to subsist on a half-cooked wild-duck, shot by

Digitized by Google

one of my party, and which was either wholly raw, or reduced to charcoal and cinders.

Fauresmith at last, and a very mild specimen of a town. A few stores, a court-house, a couple of hotels, and you have its description. That it has a future is very possible, as within an hour's drive is the Jagersfontein diamond mine, which some geological specialists will tell you is the mine of days to come.

When I visited Jagersfontein first, the outer layer of the earth alone was off the ground; its buildings were certainly not half a dozen in number. Twelve months later, and a miniature village had sprung into existence. Three or four hotels and canteens innumerable were doing a roaring trade; steam-machinery was hard at work; tunnels were cut, roads made; and the mine had more appearance of ship-shape about it than even its older brethren in the Fields—the reason of which is doubtless that the new digger commences with all the dear-bought experience which the past ten years have taught his predecessor. Claims were going begging then which since changed hands for thousands; and illicit diamond buying, the great curse of what should be one of the most remunerative of industries, was in an infancy since developed into a very sturdy manhood. A different class of men to the Kimberley diggers rule the roast at Jagersfontein—they are more diggers in reality; and perhaps the strongest evidences of the probable results of the mine as a successful venture is to be found in the fact that some of the claim-holders, notably Messrs. Kerr Brothers, have refused all inducements to merge their ground with that of companies, but prefer to work it on their own account.

Phillipolis, two days from Fauresmith, we reached after a chapter of minor accidents and the usual stop-

Digitized by Google

pages, dig-outs, twist-the-wheels, and artifices attendant upon waggon-travelling in South Africa, and found it even a quieter place than the one we had left. It had an hotel—at least, the proprietor so called it—which, had it not been for the amusement a captive baboon in the back-yard afforded, would have been positively unbearable. The people, however, were most agreeable, and, as in all towns in the Free State, sent their seats to the place of entertainment—a system of securing stalls that would rather surprise a Bond Street or Piccadilly librarian.

Next day we left the Free State and crossed the Orange river by a pontoon, *en route* for Colesberg, at which snug-lying little town we arrived late on the following evening, and remained two nights. The slumber of the second of these was hardly assisted by a number of worthy Scots, who made the occasion of my visit an opportunity for a reunion which prolonged the chorus of 'Auld Lang Syne' till day began to dawn. An enterprising showman with a merry-go-round was doing here a roaring trade, his 'horses' and 'cars' being hugely patronised by the Hottentots and Kaffirs of the native location, who seemed never to tire of the brain-whirling, eternal roundabout sensation; whilst the 'piccaninies' supplied the motor-power with all the enthusiastic ardour of the British juveniles at a Yorkshire feast or Lancashire wake.

Colesberg is very much a centre for Dutch population, and boasts two churches—the Dutch Reformed and the Dopper. The latter is an ascetic branch of the former, though to ordinary people there does not appear great room for much plainer or extremer views than those already held by the doctrinaires of the Reformed. The Dopper goes in for a quaker-like simplicity, and his

Digitized by Google

pride (if he may be credited with so unchristian-like a feeling) is to abjure the pomps and vanities of this wicked world when they present themselves in the forms of smart clothes, cleanliness, amusement, or other of the various baits by which the Evil One secures the unthinking; so, finding even the austerities of his original faith too lax for his ideas of piety, he 'reformed' the Reformed, and founded his own system of worship. Many of these religionists—as indeed, I may say, many Boers of both species of faith—possess houses in the town which they only occupy once every three months, on the occasion of their 'Naachtmaal,' or Communion celebration. They come in on these occasions from long distances, and combine piety and pleasure, religious observance and business, in a very methodical and matter-of-fact manner.

Hanover, the little village wherein we spent a night on our way to the Diamond Fields, was the next point, and we arrived there after a couple of days' travel of the usual kind, which may be briefly epitomised by stating that every hill resolved itself into a battle with the horses, there being one or two 'sticks' amongst the team; an occasional deadlock of a couple of hours at some hole or soft place in the road, where the waggon would get imbedded and require digging out; half-hour intervals of the invigorating exercise of all hands twisting the wheels, together with exhausting equine flagellation, and somewhat demoralising imprecation.

Hanover is a mere village, well laid out, well watered and planted. Some day will possibly see it a flourishing town—who can tell, in this land of surprises? Accompanied by Fry, the second day at Hanover I went out to shoot springbok, numbers being on the flats within a few miles of the town. It is one thing to go out to

Digitized by Google

shoot springbok; it is quite another thing to do so; and there is a third point to be considered—the finding of your way back to town again. We rode out, our rifles slung behind us, and, having trotted leisurely in the direction suggested, at the end of half an hour's time we sighted the antelopes quietly browsing. Off saddle and knee-halter the horses and proceed on foot is the order, which we did, and tried ineffectually some long-range shots at the springboks; then, taking different directions, I secured a position behind an anthill, where I murderously awaited some straying buck or doe. Fry, firing away in the hollow, drove the herd up in my direction, and one of them presently gave me a chance at about three hundred yards' distance. My shot was a little low, but very close, and I was surprised to find he took no notice of its proximity. I fired again—this time a little over him; still he quietly walked onwards. But having got his range, my third shot struck him, and evidently mortally wounded him; for he gave eight or ten bounds up into the air, then feebly ran a couple of hundred yards, and fell amongst the Karoo bush. With all the enthusiasm of a huntsman I dashed on foot in the direction he had taken, and spent an hour in the vain endeavour to discover where he lay. Giving up the search, I turned to look for my saddle and horse. The latter was grazing at some distance; but the saddle, like the buck, was nowhere visible. Small as the Karoo-bush is, it is quite a concealment for moderately-sized objects, and, more by luck than design, I suddenly stumbled on the saddle and housings, and had the pleasure of witnessing a merry little horse-chase performed by my 'Jäger' comrade Fry, whose steed he had omitted to knee-halter, and who now, rejoicing in his freedom, defied all efforts to capture him, and led his late rider a

Digitized by Google

lively dance for upwards of an hour and a half before success crowned his efforts. The day was hot, the ground was burnt up and caked, no drop of water visible save and except that which the mirage depicted, and our tongues cleaving to the roofs of our mouths; and to crown the enjoyment of our springbok-shooting expedition, it was impossible, from the sameness of the lines of hills and general contour of the country, to form a certain opinion as to what direction the town lay. It must be somewhere—an astute proposition on which we were agreed; and so we rode over the Karoo, its withered bush crushing crisply under each charger's hoof, until the sight of a Boer farm raised our sinking spirits. Having refreshed at the dam, we hied 'de huis to,' and learned that we were progressing favourably in a direct line from the village we desired to reach. Securing a landmark or two, we turned our horses' heads, and, sunburnt and weary, with not even an ounce of venison to exhibit, we sighted Hanover, at the entrance of which Fry shot a hare, and redeemed our character from the foul reproach of coming back completely empty-handed, though it may be submitted by the critical that to go out for springbok and return with hare can scarcely be supposed to realise the aspirations of a mighty hunter of the bounding antelope on Southern Afric's plains.

Daybreak start next day. More Scotsmen, more 'Auld Lang Syne,' and late—no, early hours night before. It's the road to the left—no, the right—perhaps the middle—yes, most likely, as it is Middleburg we are bound for. Take it by all means; which we did, and went ahead without a check till mid-day, when a passing post-cart driver, in answer to Sam, informed us we were on the Graaff Reinett road, and had left that to our destination some eighteen miles behind. Vastly

Digitized by Google

pleasant; nothing for it but to take a farm road to the left, and try and get on to the right track that way. Now the main roads, I have already stated, are mere tracks, so readers can form an idea of the glories of a farm road. We took it, and never shall I forget the continued scene of hard labour, straining horses, breaking harness, and trial of patience involved in the attempt to discover by its aid the right path which we ought to have taken. We did it, however, though how we succeeded, especially with horses not too tractable, I have often looked upon as a mystery. We arrived in Middleburg at 5.30 in the afternoon of the second day from Hanover, and the inhabitants, although on the tip-toe of expectation for our coming, deemed it improbable that the short time to elapse between our arrival and the announced hour for the presentation of 'Odds and Ends' to the Middleburgers, would permit the completion of the arrangements. Haul down the baggage, Sam; all hands to work; 'span in' all the spare Kaffirs available to carry seats and for platform building. Here, come along half a dozen of you descendants of Kreli, and carry a piano, and you shall have as much Cape brandy as you can soak your woolly heads in. Now then, steady—easy. Shade of Mendelssohn; there's a chord! as a gentle Fingo pushes up the keyboard in his enthusiasm, and strikes about three octaves simultaneously with his sinewy arm. Go quietly—all together—and away moves the piano, hoisted on the shoulders of half a dozen African aborigines, and, carried to an accompaniment of continual chatter of tongues, at length reaches the public room, just as the audience assemble on the steps outside. Chairs from one place, lamps from another, barrels from a third, and planks from a fourth. Such are the exigencies of giving

Digitized by Google

entertainments in smaller towns in South Africa. Difficulties only redeemed by the great good-nature generally shown by the residents, and the disposition they exhibit to assist as far as lies in their power to remove all obstacles from the path of those who minister to their amusements. I have travelled more fully, and visited more places 'with a show through Southern Africa,' than any predecessor in the amusement-catering line; and I may say, that disobliging, selfish, or disagreeable people, with whom I have come in contact from a business point of view, have been the exception and not the rule throughout. Therefore it is no wonder that, with the good-natured assistance afforded, the eight o'clock chime of the town clock saw everything complete, the curtain ready to draw up, and 'the show just agoing to commence.'

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

A FRIEND IN NEED—OSTRICH-FARMING—CRADOCK—A COLONIAL RACE MEETING—THE GREAT FISH RIVER—A NIGHT MARCH—MIDDLEBURG AGAIN—HAILSTORMS—RICHMOND—COAST SCENES—VICTORIA TO BEAUFORT WEST.

'A FRIEND in need is a friend indeed' is a time-honoured saying, and one which I felt inclined to endorse when, on the afternoon of the day we left Middleburg, its avenue of trees and boasted water-supply behind us, we halted our team opposite the farm-house of a hospitable gentleman engaged in ostrich-farming, and whose name, Gilfillan, had an 'auld Scottish' flavour about it that smacked of milk and bannocks, brose and barley-bree. The weather had changed for the worse—becoming intensely cold and wet, and having learned at Cradock that a Mr. Gilfillan, whose acquaintance I made on the voyage out, lived on our line of route, we decided to give him a call. Cæsar and Pompey, from the Ethiopian point of view, bore strange resemblance, and it so happened that, in searching for our friend, we cannoned against his brother, who extended his hospitality with much good-nature, sending for the real object of our visit, who resided close by, and who, formerly holding an important appointment in the Cape Mounted Police, was as soldier-like and good a specimen of a first-class frontier man as I have ever met. He had relinquished

Digitized by Google

the sword for the ostrich-whip, and was engaged in the peaceful occupation of farming those grotesque-looking birds, whose feathers, scarcely ornamental to themselves, go far to embellish the beauty of the fair sex all the world over, and are even honoured by royal courts with a prominence in drawing-room toilets. Mr. John Gilfillan might be said to be the father of ostrich-farmers, having been one of the earliest to suggest, as he was to adopt, a species of industry that proved to those who took time by the forelock a remarkably remunerative one. It has recently, from many causes—the over-production, competition, decrease in prices, etc.—become less valuable; but at the time I speak of a first-class pair of breeding ostriches would fetch a couple of hundred pounds, and young birds and chicks proportionate prices.

Not being associated with hard work, the industry suited the taste of the Dutch farmers of the Cape, who followed the lead successfully set, until on nearly all the farms of the midland and western provinces ostriches were to be found as much part and parcel of the stock as the cocks, hens, ducks, and geese of the ordinary farmyard at home. Artificial aid, too, has been introduced to assist the process of incubation, and at least a couple of Cape ostrich-farmers, Messrs. Douglas and Distin, have obtained a notoriety outside South Africa for the vigour, skill, and energy they have exhibited in this singular method of supplying a fashionable demand. It is an industry more or less at the mercy of the whirligig of fashion, which creates or crushes a demand which its votaries will gratify regardless of cost.

Some dozen years ago ostrich-farming was unknown, and by a system of hunting down and killing the wild birds the Karoo was becoming rapidly depopulated of its feathered denizens. It was the custom to run them

Digitized by Google

down, and, like the golden eggs of the fable, the bird was sacrificed for the spoil it afforded. A South African poet has graphically described this sinewy-limbed bird in its fearsome flight, where he says:

> 'The fleet-footed ostrich over the waste,
> Speeds like a horseman who travels in haste;
> Hieing away to the home of her rest,
> Where she and her mate have scooped their nest,
> Far hid from the pitiless plunderer's view,
> In the pathless depths of the parched Karoo.'

The ostrich is an interesting study to the gastronomist; that wonderful stomach of his seems able to digest anything he can succeed in conveying down his gullet for the operation of its juices. Nothing seems to come amiss; you can feed him on crushed maize or bones, chopped lucerne and clover, or broken stones; he does not disdain a *bonne bouche* of a couple of pocket-knives; while a handful of tenpenny nails he positively esteems a delicacy. Don't go too near him if you want to retain your glittering breastpin, for he will certainly try to pluck it out of your scarf if you give his lengthy neck air reaching-distance; and if he is engaged in assisting his better-half in the process of hatching, which he most thoughtfully does, I should say he is safest at about a quarter of a mile with a good stiff fence or two between. During the time of incubation, they are placed in 'camps' fenced in, and the male bird is intensely fierce, and cannot be approached without serious danger. A blow from his double toe has been known to rip a man's body completely open; and every season in Cape papers reports are published of deaths resulting from attacks of ostriches through incautious persons venturing too near them unprovided with the long fork with which the experienced farmer keeps them at bay. The merest

Digitized by Google

rap on the head will kill these ungainly birds, whose feathers and eyes are their only claims to beauty. The latter are extremely beautiful, and the power of sight they possess is almost illimitable.

Cradock at last, after two days' road-struggling, to which penal servitude should compare favourably ; and Cradock *en fête*, with a prospective three days' race-meeting. The chief evidence of anything going forward beyond the ordinary everyday existence, consisted in an agglomeration of bipeds in the principal hotel, and who, it was not difficult to divine, belonged to that class of mankind known as 'horsey'—just the same 'all the world around'—same side-pocketed coats, smart hats tilted at an angle of twenty-five, over an eyebrow beneath which beams forth a twinkling orb indicative of dead knowledge in matters of time, weight, and distance; tight inexpressibles and a straw or two of forage between the teeth complete the picture. If you are not a racing man yourself, good reader, you will find little to interest you in the conversation of racing men, and the coterie gathered beneath the roof of the principal Cradock hotel on my arrival were in no way more agreeable than their confreres of the turf at home or abroad. This Cradock race-meeting, however, is reckoned the chief one of the Colony, and, as such, I felt it a duty I owed myself to witness it. Imagine a race-course on an elevated plateau, surrounded by ranges of hills that seem to rise suddenly from a valley which encircles it; or, if you have ever seen a panorama proper, with its raised point of vantage from which your eye can travel completely round the picture, think of it and you have the position of Cradock race-ground. The course is a made one, and pretty well cleared of the ironstone shingle that so plentifully studs the 'Veld'

Digitized by Google

around, and over which it is anything but pleasant to gallop your horse, as you probably will, in a desire to see them start and finish—that is, if you visit the course *en cheval.* There is a galvanised iron standhouse, not very large, a paddock, a ring, and a volunteer rifle band, whose brazen notes struck me as scarcely value for the amount of remuneration I heard one of the stewards say was to be theirs. There were a few Boer ox waggons, a good many Kaffirs, and about 300 or 400 white people, and I was congratulating myself upon the contrast the want of blackguard element presented to an English race-meeting, when an enterprising individual with a roulette table met my view, and the old familiar invitation, in all the piquant accent of Whitechapel, fell upon my ear, and I was asked to 'back my opinion'—'faint 'art never won fair lady'—'hevens on the black, two to one the red, five to one the blue, height to one the yaller, and twelve to one the kerown and feathaw.' The racing was pretty good, and some decent horseflesh was on view; but the jockeys were like Kimberley diamonds—whites, off-colours, and occasionally blacks. The racing man is generally conceded to be the incarnation of self; when in the ring he does not throw away many chances; he elbows his way unceremoniously in and out of the paddock; if an opportunity for judicious hedging presents itself he doesn't let it slip: but if you want to see him exhibit all the finer feelings of good-nature, breeding, or self-sacrifice, meet him at the dinner-scramble in the hotel Cradock, after the races are over. A flock of 'aasvogels' or African vultures enjoying a worn-out ox, a party of jackals in a hen-roost, a drove of wolves regaling on an antelope, a python gorging a hind-quarter of horse, I have seen, and am willing to admit that their appetites were from the degree of fair to good;

Digitized by Google

but for superlative efforts in the respective branches of mastication and digestion, commend me to the racing men of South Africa, when, having successfully stampeded mine host of Cradock's dinner-table, they fairly settle to the work of consumption of his viands. A notable feature in this and other colonial meetings is a system of sweepstakes which, having been drawn, are put up to auction, and sold to the highest bidder, the buyer having to add a certain amount to the sweep proportionate to the sum paid for his chance.

Cradock is a very nice town, possessing one of the handsomest pieces of ecclesiastical architecture in South Africa, the Dutch Church, erected at a cost of £30,000. A fine viaduct spans the river; there is an excellent market. The place is a great ostrich-farming centre, and feathers are, strange to say, not the lightest articles of its trade. There are several particularly good fellows there, and my recollections of it are bright and pleasant; and musing on what I had seen and done there, I swam the Fish river some hours after saying adieu to Cradock acquaintances, and evening saw us on the return to Middleburg. The night fell, and visible darkness having set in, a council of war, or rather of direction, was held, and it was concluded that we must be but a short distance from our destination. One of the party seized the leaders' heads, and taking a lantern in my hand, I preceded the team and waggon for a distance that appeared about six or seven miles. No signs of the town, so it was determined that the first water come to should be the signal to 'span out' and camp for the night. Ha, here we are boys! a river; pull out of the road, and unyoke. Great noise of dogs barking somewhere near; must be a farm—large farm too—or else proprietor has flocks of dogs with a sheep or two to

Digitized by Google

take care of them. Very odd we missed the town; must have taken the wrong road in the dark. Great nuisance. Somebody must sleep under the waggon. Short of provisions, too; nothing to cook, and six miles of pedal exercise to produce appetite. Well, can't be helped. Tie up the horses to the wheels, and turn in. Good-night, everybody. Confound those dogs! Why it's nearly morning! Didn't sleep? Not surprised —suffering from dogophobia? There's the dawn. Eh, look! the other side of river—what! No! yes! A building—several buildings. Well, hang me if it isn't Middleburg, within a couple of stone-throws! And it was; and tired and hungry, we had spent the night on the bank of a miserable little river on the confines of the town, with the object of our night-march within another ten minutes' walk.

Remaining but one day, we started for Richmond, and on the way experienced a hailstorm of true South African pattern. Huge woolpack clouds, deadening in colour, seemed banking up on the horizon a little to our left; and presently a regular whirl-wind, driving the dust before it, gave token that the storm was coming. Sam jumped down and seized the leaders' heads, whilst the occupants of the waggon tried to fasten all the canvas window-sails and other coverings before the full strength of the storm was on us. The hail, with stones as large as pistol-bullets, came driving at us, and the force of the wind seemed to fairly shake the waggon as though it would bodily lift the conveyance. Sam stood to his post, his only covering a 'kaross' of skins which I threw him, and the horses, turning their hind-quarters to the storm, shivered and cowered under the pitiless mitraille the wintry heavens assailed them with. All the time the

Digitized by Google

thunder roared and rattled, and the lightning absolutely seemed to play all round Sam, who, a sort of copper-coloured Ajax, stood to his steeds in bold defiance of the elements. In an hour's time the storm had passed, and but for the fact that the roads had become rivers, and that the rivers were rapidly becoming oceans, it might be assumed that nothing particular had transpired. A friendly Boer, driving an American spider, advised us to push on, as 'the Spruit' would soon be impassable; and acting as pilot through the waste of mud and waters that everywhere environed us, he pushed his pair of nags along, and following his advice we sedulously kept close in his wake till we reached a haven, or rather a house, whose proprietor, a good-natured Dutchman named Naudee, proffered the hospitality of his fire, and copious libations of that mysterious brown hot-watery beverage which, in the fulness of his innocent heart, the South African Boer calls coffee. Great was the work on this farm, for a new house was being erected, and quite a number of English masons were engaged upon the new premises, in which they and a lot of ostrich chicks lived. The roof appeared to have been constructed first, and they were descending story by story to the foundation. They had a good fire, some liquor, and were making griddle-cakes, and were pressing in their kind offices and hospitality, which was accepted by some of my party, the shelter of a roof above and a dry floor to lie on being quite sybaritean luxuries in these exigencies of travel. This to be said of South Afric's climate, an exposure that would be attended by severe if not dangerous results in any other country, seems here to be undertaken with a sort of impunity, and despite the wettings, camping out and sleeping on the 'Veld' of

Digitized by Google

some of my party, instances of colds or other disagreeable consequences were few.

Richmond appears a good centre, and lies on the way from the Cape Colony to the Diamond Fields. It is of the ordinary type of colonial Dutch towns, but somewhat advanced, boasting no less than three hotels, the merits of which I will leave the local auctioneer to dilate upon when he has them under his hammer; and you will then learn the fabulous fortunes that have been and are yet to be made in these hostelries—these epitomes of comfort for travellers in the wild Karoo.

An interesting libel case was in progress on our arrival in Richmond, and as the large hall of the Court was the only public room available, we assumed the virtue (though we had it not) of being interested in the administration of the law of the Colony, in the hope that it would be fully administered in time to permit a performance of another kind to proceed. The legal procedure in these Cape Colonial courts is singular. In jury cases—as, for instance, one of cattle-lifting—all evidence, speeches, summing up, etc., has to be rendered in English and Dutch; and where a Kaffir is charged who is not acquainted with either of these languages, his native tongue is also used, thus spinning out the trials to triple their length. An interpreter translates everything into Dutch or Kaffir as required, and the system is a death-blow to any attempts at oratorical effort on the part of judge or counsel, who have to rein up their flow of language until the polyglottis of the go-between jerks off his occasionally very free translation of what they are saying. In the libel case at trial, the parties being English, and the judge constituting jury also, the services of the interpreter were a sort of sinecure, and I was under the impression that his goodly office was to

Digitized by Google

be laid on the shelf; but, lo! a stolid Dutchman and his wife were called as witnesses, and having been sworn in Dutch fashion by holding up the two principal fingers of the right hand, the worthy translator comes to the fore. It was natural to suppose that the witnesses were from some country district where the English language was seldom used; but when the interpreter translated their evidence to the effect that they had lived in Richmond over twenty years, opposite the principal hotel, with English spoken daily around them, the wonder continued to grow, and reflecting and pondering on the Chinese-like conservatism of this worthy pair, I ultimately gave it up as a riddle quite beyond my powers of solving. The trial proceeded, and ultimately a verdict was given for the defendant, the proprietor of a newspaper, and thus a triumph was registered for the 'fourth estate of the realm,' at the expense of an aggrieved Boniface, the purity of whose canteen was, he considered, slandered in the columns of the local *Thunderer*. A rather lively system of cross-examination set in when the counsel for the defence rose to ventilate some antecedents of the virtuous publican, amongst which the following are a few samples of the cross-questions and crooked answers put and received:

'Were you ever at——?'

'Yes, I was.'

'Do you remember on that occasion leaving your hotel by the bedroom-window at night, having omitted to observe the trifling formality of previously paying your bill?'

'I never stayed in an hotel there.'

'On your oath, sir, is not the substance of my question true?'

'I never stayed in an hotel there.'

Digitized by Google

A brief whisper took place between counsel and defendant, and the former, evidently primed with further information, a deadly determination in his eye, and a generally apoplectic look about his countenance that radiated upwards until lost in a halo-like fringe of hair surrounding his very bald and very shiny head, returned to the charge.

'Was it an accommodation-house?' (*i.e.*, this is a mysterious species of emasculated hostelrie peculiar to South Africa, a compromise between a private canteen and a farmhouse).

'There was an accommodation-house there.'

'Did you pay the bill before your midnight departure?'

'There was no bill presented.'

'Were you ever in —— and while there were you tried and convicted of forgery and embezzlement?'

'It was quashed.'

'Answer my question: Were you tried and convicted?'

'The case was quashed.'

'Is it true that no respectable girl will live in your house as a servant?'

'This has nothing to do with the case.'

At this stage of the proceedings I wandered out and sought fresh air, that of the court-house becoming rapidly tainted, and as I fully anticipated an attempt would be made to convict the plaintiff out of his own mouth of arson, murder, or what appears to be regarded in the Colony as a much more heinous crime—the dreadful one of 'cattle-lifting'—I deemed it prudent not to be an accessory to the utter downfall of mine host, lest the arrangements for dinner might be materially disorganized, for his hotel was my place of abode. The more we travel, the more selfish we become. After

Digitized by Google

the concluding performance, when the lights were being put out, an intelligent youth who was expending his lung-power in blowing out the paraffin lamps, succeeded in bringing a chandelier of half-a-dozen of them to the ground with a mighty crash, and for a few minutes it looked as though the 'Magistratie Kantoor' was likely to be reduced to cinders. Phillips or Fry seized a couple of karosses of skins and smothered the flames, and the paternal parent of the young lamp-quenching volunteer probably writhed in financial agony when the head-constable brought him round the bill for damages occasioned by his hopeful's enthusiasm. A right good fellow was the head-constable of Richmond, most friendly and kind; with the utmost willingness he placed a number of his men at my disposal to regulate the apartment for the reception of the audience, and one of them, a Zulu, named 'Camille,' showed a quiet intelligence and disposition to work that augur strongly for the possible future of the Kaffir as an element of progress in the work-a-day world of Southern Africa.

From Richmond we went to Victoria West, a small village wedged in between two long mountainous ridges, and in a barren-looking country, where all is stony, bleak and desert-like, and where shingle, boulder-stones, dry beds of rivers, meer-cats and rock-rabbits abound. We remained two days, and then started on a long 'trekk' to Beaufort-West, where, after two and a half days' travelling, with the usual 'outspans' and camping-out, we arrived at early morning and enjoyed all the luxuries of civilization as afforded by the Royal Hotel of that place. Beaufort-West is an uncommonly nice little town, as South African towns go, and being the terminus of the line from Cape Town enjoys a great deal of business and trade, all goods sent by this route

Digitized by Google

to the Diamond Fields having to make it a forwarding base. How long its glories will exist when the extension of the line converts it into a side-town is a speculation to be worked out by others more interested than I am, but it goes without saying that it will in some degree lessen its present importance. It is well planted, possesses a dam like a small sea, a handsome town-hall with a capital assembly-room, quite a plurality of hotels, some excellent stores, and though very much like a camp at the railway end, has numerous really comfortable and evidently old established dwelling-houses in its recognised thoroughfares. A week's comparative rest in Beaufort had a beneficial effect on man and horse, and after undergoing the process of photography by a local artist, the gallant team, well whipped up by Sam, the ribbons handled by the ubiquitous Fry, rattled away on the road to Murraysburg, an eighty-five mile 'trekk,' with the probability of plenty of road difficulties and dangers before us.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

MURRAYSBURG—A NIGHT ON THE SNEUBERG—A MOUNTAIN ROAD—GRAAFF REINNETT—PORT ELIZABETH—A WHITE KAFFIR—AN IRISH MALAY—HOMEWARD BOUND—THE EX-EMPRESS OF THE FRENCH—PORT ELIZABETHAN INCIDENTS—A COLONIAL REGATTA—UITENHAGE—A SINGULAR VIOLINIST.

MURRAYSBURG, previously visited by us on the occasion of the first day's stage in our journey to the Diamond Fields, is a small place of Dutch origin, and stands a sort of oasis in the desert of Karoo, extending farther than the eye can reach around it. The hotel was kept by an Irish lady.

'Indeed, Mrs. Y——, there is not the least necessity to inform us that you come from Limerick. The unmistakable accent of that portion of the Emerald Isle requires no adjuration from the estimable "Father Tom" to make it cleave to your tongue,' I said, with the intention of drawing out the good lady on the subject of 'faith and fatherland.'

'It's a wonder, thin,' said she; 'for I lift it when I was four years ould, and have never seen the ould place since.'

'Well, that is a wonder, anyhow; and only goes to prove that the "raal ould" mother-tongue and the mother's milk must be imbibed at the same time,' said I. 'So here's to you, Mrs. Y——; and, to give you an Irish toast, "May ye never die till I kill you, or till

Digitized by Google

your shin-bone ud clane a farthin' pipe "'—a sentiment which experience has often told me is a perfectly safe one to propound to any company of Erin's sons or daughters, however mixed their opinions may otherwise be.

The only place in Murraysburg where an entertainment could be given was the schoolroom of the Dutch Reformed Church; and the minister and his committee had to be consulted on the subject. A general acquiescence was the result, and a crowded audience crowned the work.

The minister of the Dutch Church is a person of real importance in these small communities. The system of religion being Calvinistic, and consequently akin to the Presbyterian body, it is not infrequently the case to find these cures held by Scotchmen. The warmth of the African climate appears generally to have thawed somewhat the icicles of prejudice with which they surround themselves at home; and more than one instance I could mention where my 'Show through Southern Africa' was heavily indebted in the way of rooms, piano, etc., to the kind offices of good-natured clergymen of various denominations.

With another eighty-mile 'trekk' before us, we left Murraysburg at seven in the morning, and nine o'clock that night found us on the top of the Sneuberg, a mountain standing at an immense altitude above Graaff Reinnett, the place of our destination. On the plateau of the Sneuberg's summit stands a pike—not the fish, nor yet the celebrated weapon, but the species prefixed by 'turn'—a veritable toll-bar; and anyone who makes the descent of that mountain-side will scarcely begrudge the amount levied to keep in repair a road which is certainly a splendid piece of engineering work.

We halted at the 'pike;' and whilst there a Hottentot,

Digitized by Google

riding what is known as a Basuto pony, struck into a conversation with my groom Sam. Having a grey horse with a wounded pastern running behind the waggon, we suggested trading with the fellow for his pony, which he exchanged for my lame nag, and three sovereigns to boot. That Basuto pony, comparatively wild, and only partially tamed, became afterwards the best, pluckiest, and most willing horse of my team; and when others were giving out signs of distress at the end of a long day, 'Pompey,' the 'off-leader,' was steadily pegging away, and never seeming to tire of the work.

We camped that night on the mountain. It was bitterly cold, so we dragged the waggon amongst the mimosa-thorns to try and secure what little shelter from the piercing wind their branches afforded. There was fortunately a good supply of thorns and stumps, so we piled them up until our camp-fire resembled that of a signal-beacon, and might probably have been seen by the Graaff Reinnetters on their way home to bed. The horses were tied under the mimosa-trees, and the latest of sounds to be heard, ere we dozed off, was the eternal champ, champ of their jaws, as they ground up the chopped forage and mealies which their groom Sam had spread in a canvas manger for their delectation.

At early morning we commenced the descent, and the precipitous road necessitated the use of so much brake power, that the wood blocks were worn to shavings, and the iron bolts were burning hot with the friction. As I said before, it is a splendid bit of road, as it winds down the sides of the mountain; cut in some places clean out of a wall of rock, a precipice on your right or left hand, as the case may be, a valley hundreds of feet below you, its sides clad in all the

Digitized by Google

jungle-like verdure of bush, cactus, prickly pear, aloes, etc., the team moving at a walk, the wheelers well in hand, and the break screeching an unmusical accompaniment to your various thoughts and fancies, none the least material of which is the reflection that if those leaders don't keep straight there is a strong possibility of your making that descent in about twenty seconds which generally requires an hour or two in accomplishment. Smith's ! nine miles from Graaff Reinnett. 'Outspan' for breakfast. See what the 'Baas' has in the store. No bread ? no fresh meat ? nothing but pickled mutton, tough as—no, not leather ; don't slander that pack-saddle there, which, if stewed, would, I verily believe, compare favourably with Mr. Smith's corned goat. That descent of the Sneuberg, however, is an appeal to the appetite which won't take denial, so we were fain to attack the leathern particles of Smith's defunct 'Billy,' served up hot from the fire, where they had been cooked *à la grill.* As we approached the town we began to make the acquaintance of Kloofs full of bush, and of a river brawling pleasantly along with a rippling melody, which was as pleasant to the ear as the appearance of vegetation was to the eye, especially after so long an absence from such scenes, for our experiences of both these points of interest had been few and far between from the time we left Cape Town till our arrival at Graaff Reinnett, and I was quite inclined to give the palm for urban beauty to this little Dutch town, sleeping quietly at the feet of the mountain Kops, that stand sentinel over its slumbers ; for it is a quiet place, considering its size and importance, and partakes much of the fair-and-easy-going Dutch element which created it, and which more or less still dominates its existence. It is well laid out ; its streets run at

Digitized by Google

right-angles, and each may be said to be a mile long; so the town stands on a square mile or more of land, and is well planted and full of gardens wherein anything will grow. In the garden of a resident (Mr. Viner) I saw some splendid specimens of grafting, five distinct grafts of pears thriving from the one stump, and the orange trees were literally bending beneath the weight of their golden fruit. The town-hall, Graaff Reinnett, is scarcely what you may call a model assembly-room, and its condition occasioned some severe passages of arms between the town-clerk and myself, which resulted in his threatening open warfare, by means of the town constables, to forcibly close the doors, and my defying his authority or ability to do so. Matters, however, ended amicably, and water of the smoothest kind succeeded what at one time promised to be a storm of a serious character, and one calculated to shake that august body, the Municipal Council, with righteous wrath at the temerity exhibited by any outsider in venturing to question the excellence of the arrangements of the 'Staats Huis,' or town-hall.

I remained a week in Graaff Reinnet, and having sent my horses to run on a farm close by, departed by train for Port Elizabeth, the chief town of the Eastern Province of Cape Colony, and one which may be ranked as the chief business port on the East Coast, situated as it is on one side of Algoa Bay. A run of something over two hundred miles brought us to the 'Bay,' an increasing bush and richer 'veld' being the signs denoting our approach to the coast. The 'veld' flowers were all in bloom, and the country on either side of the railway track looked at times like a garden, so rich and varied were the tints its brush exhibited. At a side station I saw for the first time a tribe known as Red Kaffirs, from a fashion they

Digitized by Google

have of daubing not only their bodies and faces, but their garments and blankets, with a species of red clay or loam.

There was a happy family, consisting of a mother and her very young infant, a couple of other women and some children. The women smoked Kaffir pipes, and I borrowed the 'picanniny' from his mother, and handed him into the carriage to some lady friends. He did not exhibit the slightest uneasiness at being thus abducted from maternal care, and I do not think I ever heard Kaffir infants making day or night hideous with that most terrible of civilization's results—baby howls.

Having exhibited the 'picanniny' round, I returned him to his mamma, whose twinkling black eyes and shining white teeth bore evidence of the amusement the incident afforded.

It was night when we reached Port Elizabeth, and after some little trouble respecting the baggage, we reached the Phœnix Hotel, and settled down, though late, to as excellent and well-served a dinner as the heart, or rather stomach, of a man neither a gourmand nor epicure need solicit for internal comfort.

Apropos of the journey down, an accident took place on the line, resulting fatally to a railway official named Little, who on inquiry turned out to be the driver who had piloted the last train which crossed the Tay Bridge prior to its disaster, and having come to Africa to try and better his fortunes, strangely enough met with his accidental death there.

Port Elizabeth is a brisk and thoroughly business place; this strikes you at once. Men don't seem to have time on their hands—they have work to do and they do it. As for the town itself, man has done everything for it, nature absolutely nothing. Its site is the

Digitized by Google

side of as bleak and barren a hill as could have well been selected, unsheltered from the blasts of storms or the fierce rays of the pitiless sun. Its harbour is nothing but an arm of the sea, and with storms from certain points unsafe, in fact, dangerous. Its docks are all in futurity: for all the outlay, works of the kind up to the present have proved comparative failures, and if we except a small landing-pier, and a stone embankment, the work of Sir John Coode, there is absolutely nothing to exhibit for the money that has been sunk in the endeavour to construct efficient harbour accommodation. And yet, despite all this, Port Elizabeth is not only a habitable place, but the actual base of an immense up-country trade, and the amount of merchandise landed here is enormous. There being no docks, the work of unloading vessels is carried on by means of large lighters or surf-boats; and these, in turn, are off-loaded when close to the shore by Kaffir labourers, vulgarly called 'beachcombers,' who, attired in the costume of Adam, carry through the often boiling surf packages, the size and weight of which would daunt the heart of that example of strength, the British navvy.

Amongst these fellows working on the beach I saw one day a *lusus naturæ* in the form of a white Kaffir, and very repulsive he was. The features and peculiarities of the African native were all defined, but the colouring matter for his ebony skin appeared to have been omitted in his manufacture, with the result of a pinky-white outer cuticle, which the sea-water was rapidly pickling into salt junk. His eyes, too, appeared red and weak, and exhibited an albino look, and his negro features, in their white colours, were decidedly plain.

It seems a thoughtful arrangement of Providence that the negro is black, as it helps to conceal his unprepos-

Digitized by Google

sessing lineaments. A white Kaffir sounds rather Barnumistic, but yet Port Elizabeth boasted a still greater novelty—an Irish Malay! Believe it or not, reader, but I have seen the individual, and his story I learned from the lips of one of the most genial, as I believe him to be one of the most truthful of men—the worthy Catholic clergyman who presided over the church of St. Mary, and the pleasure of whose acquaintance, the kindness of whose disposition and warmth of his hospitable welcome, remain bright particular spots in the memory of my visit to Port Elizabeth. The story of the Irish Malay was simply this: When a boy he lost his parents, was taken charge of by Malays, brought up by them in the Mahommedan faith, adopted their ideas, and having done the pilgrimage to Mecca, sported his green silk gown and turban with the best of them, and all the while retained his father's patronymic, which, between us, reader, was as Irish as the pigs of Connemara.

An incident of no ordinary kind occurred about this time. It was the arrival in South Africa of the ex-Empress Eugénie, who was making a pilgrimage to Natal in order to visit the place in Zululand where her son had fallen in the then recent campaign. She came by the mail steamer *German*, whose captain, Coxwell by name, is commodore of the Union Company's fleet, and is quite a sea-lion, being the most obese, as he is generally reckoned the best-tempered, of the many good fellows who are the monarchs of all they survey—inside the bulwarks of their floating castles. 'Laugh and grow fat' appeared to have been Captain Coxwell's motto, and he is undoubtedly highly popular, not only with the passengers under his care, but with the crew he commands, and probably the latter is the safer and most genuine test to go by. An elegant cabin suite was

Digitized by Google

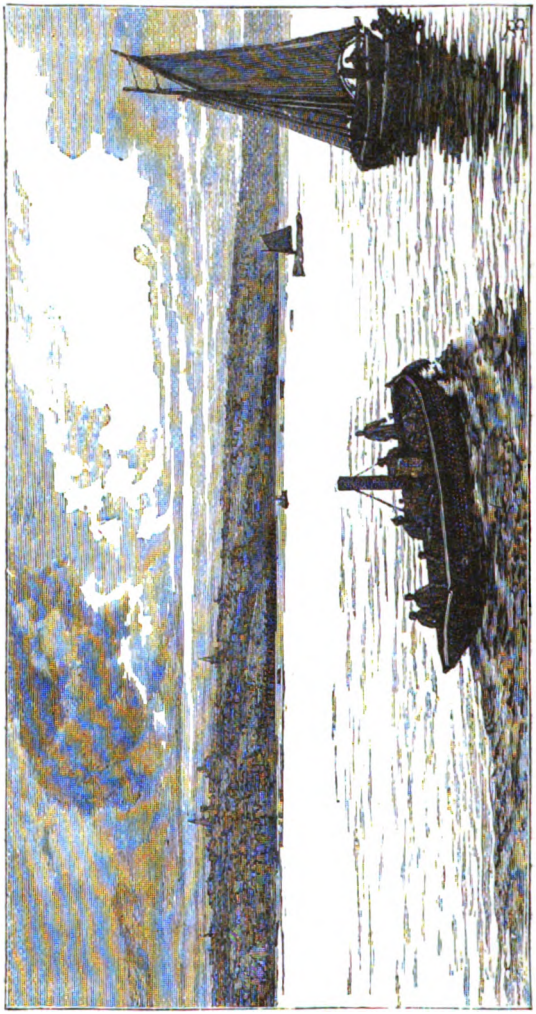
fitted up for the widowed and childless lady, whose piety and devotion led her to make so long a journey, and the worthy Captain had nothing but praise for the demeanour and manner exhibited by her on all occasions.

A good many years ago, a somewhat forward boy, I crushed my way through the crowd surrounding her carriage, opposite the Queen's Hotel, Manchester, and shouting the words 'Vive Eugénie,' received a graceful acknowledgment from an elegant-looking woman, whose face was mantled by a bright blush, and who smiled as she recognised an oft-repeated cry which had echoed and re-echoed through the streets of Imperial France of that day. The picture was a good deal changed now: the dark hair had become streaked with grey, the lines of sorrow and care visible in every lineament; but the contour of face and figure was still retained—the elegance and grace of the heyday of her charms, years had failed to efface, and as she walked the quarter-deck, clad in the sombre hues of mourning, her sad fate—now entirely alone, without husband, without child—the object of her journey, and her romantic story, created an interest which deepened into respect in all who had the privilege of thus beholding her.

A fine view of Port Elizabeth is to be obtained from the steamships anchored out in the bay, and it is rapidly becoming quite a large town. It has some good public buildings, and on 'the hill,' terraces and villas, the homes of the men of wealth, stretch far and wide, and everything that can be done by man to render it an agreeable place to dwell in will no doubt be done, for, as I before remarked, Nature has raised as many obstacles as it conveniently could to such a desideratum.

'Of course you are going to the regatta?' This was

Digitized by Google



Port Elizabeth.

Digitized by Google

the observation on everybody's tongue, the great boating day of the clubs on the Zwartkops river; and acquiescing to the very general invitation, I took the train to 'Red House,' near which the pavilions of aquatic Port Elizabeth are to be found. They were crowded with the friends of the members of the clubs, and the fair sex were well represented, elegant toilettes predominating; and if it were not for the Malays and a sprinkling of coloured people outside these charmed circles of 'society,' the former of whom kept the air resounding to their dancing and singing, it might have been a regatta in some west of England town, and I have more than once thought 'the Bay' a smaller Southampton over the water, after undergoing an earthquake or other upheaval, to account for its steep hill and streets of acute inclination.

While passing the open door of the luncheon-room at the Ino Club, I met the editor of a Cape journal. Attracted by the scene within, that of the ladies enjoying luncheon, for *place aux dames* was the motto of the club in the matter of 'first come, first served,' we stopped and gazed; stroke of knife succeeded thrust of fork. Beer—no, lemonade—corks popped, conversation tinkled, viands disappeared, and a brilliant opportunity for an appropriate quotation presented itself, so, seizing it and the editor, forgetting he had a deaf ear, I exclaimed in loudly whispered accents, 'Oh, that we should call these delicate creatures ours, and not their appetites!' A dangerous twinkle of the eye plainly showed how well he appreciated my application of the passage, and a sickly smile of gastronomic disappointment accompanied his rejoinder: 'Yes, they will be there for hours, and some of them are frights! You're quite right!'

Sadly I thought of the wreck of my brilliant effort, and meditating whether to throw my editorial friend or

Digitized by Google

fiend into the river, or buy him an ear-trumpet, I moved away, resolving never again to quote Shakespeare without first assuring myself that the tympanums and drums of my listeners were intact in all particulars.

The heat was intense, the enthusiasm proportionate, hospitality unstinted, and cures for headaches next day at a premium. The bar of the Phœnix next morning before breakfast was in much request, and sodas and seltzers in great demand; the 'extreme heat' of the day before seemed to have penetrated to the clerk responsible for the filling in of the *menu* card, which contained the item 'hashed gimlets' as a tempting morsel in the bill of fare. An attempt was made to explain that 'giblets' was the word intended, and so the evident insinuation that the guests had the digestions of ostriches was explained away. Another incident, also attributable no doubt to the 'extreme heat,' was the nocturnal ramble of the doctor of one of the steamers into all the bedrooms whose occupants had failed to shoot their bolts, and his appearance next morning clad in various articles of apparel belonging to hotel guests, even unto the socks and boots of his pedal extremities, and in which he was coolly walking out; nor was it extraordinary (owing to the 'extreme heat') that a local paper, commenting on the loss of the *American* and the death of Mr. Paterson, the representative of Port Elizabeth in the Cape Parliament, should say, 'The good men do lives after them,' and quote the same as from Byron's 'Lallah Rookh,' thus gracefully blending Marc Antony's observations regarding the 'evil' memory of mankind, and fastening the authorship of Moore's oriental poesy upon the already capacious mantle of his friend, the greater bard. It is not often that Port Elizabeth unbends; it is a thorough business place, and the 'extreme heat' of Zwartkops Regatta was an

Digitized by Google

ample explanation of any personal or literary eccentricities occurring on dates immediately near its celebration.

At the theatre one day, I was addressed by a dark-eyed man who stated he was an Italian, and whose appearance was decidedly more foreign than spruce. He was a violinist, and had just come from South America in a sailing vessel. He played the violin in a manner peculiar to himself, by placing it in the position of a violoncello, and scraping away at it double-bass fashion. This was owing to his having been wounded in the wrist in a Garibaldian *émeute* during the palmy days of the fighting against King Bomba of Naples, and his being unable to raise his arm in the ordinary way. He knew nothing of music theoretically, but his brilliant execution and wonderful ear carried him through all the difficulties of operatic, eccentric, or other music so successfully, that during the remainder of my stay he became a feature in the orchestra, while the *entr'acte* melodies were performed, and an imitation of a singing-bird in one of his selections was the signal of a nightly call for its repetition.

Requiring the services of a general man, another gentleman of foreign origin was introduced to me and duly installed in Phillips's place. The latter having 'worked his passage,' as he termed it, was now homeward bound; and my last words to him were that if ever I met him sucking a crutch-handled stick on the flags of Pall Mall, or hanging over the railings in Rotten Row in the gorgeous panoply of a London exquisite, he was to acknowledge his hour of servitude by answering, 'Yah, Baas!' when I addressed him.

My wife, who had up to this shared all my travelling vicissitudes and dangers with great courage and patience, decided, in view of continuance of similar travels, to

Digitized by Google

return to England, and sailed by the same steamer we had come out to the Cape in.

Bathing at a point of beach one day, in Algoa Bay, in company with a couple of friends, we saw, at a distance of a couple of hundred yards, an object approaching. A shout was raised of 'Ware shark! 'ware shark!' and a precipitate retreat to the shore was the natural result. The object of our affright turned out to be, however, nothing but a piece of driftwood floating rapidly towards the shore by the incoming tide. But sharks are occasionally to be seen in the bays of South Africa, and at a later date my *confrère*, Fry, had quite a narrow escape of his life, which he owes to the sagacity and strength of a retriever dog belonging to Mr. Wallace, then proprietor of the Phœnix Hotel, which brought him to land when exhausted in his endeavours to escape one of these monsters of the deep.

The new addition to my staff was a Russian Pole named Checheffski, or Jejeffski, or something equally unpronounceable; so we called him 'Grab' for brevity, and he soon became perfectly familiarized with his new name. He was quite a character, being, according to his own account, a political refugee, wrongfully suspected of Nihilism; and having decamped from Cronstadt in consequence of 'information received,' had since led a most adventurous life as seaman before the mast, and afterwards, during several voyages as mate, had served with the Mexican Volunteers against the Indians, and lastly indulged in a little Kaffir shooting during the Galeka rising and subsequent Zulu War.

I stayed a month in Port Elizabeth, and with my travelling-party reduced to Fry, Grab, Sam, and myself, I returned to Graaf Reinnett to take up my horses and waggon, and strike through the eastern districts lying between the latter and Grahamstown.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

THROUGH THE MIDLAND PROVINCE—PEARSTON—AN EQUINE SUICIDE —SOMERSET EAST—COOKHOUSE DRIFT—BEDFORD—A NEWSPAPER PROPRIETOR—AN AMATEUR SNAKE-CHARMER—ADELAIDE—FORT BEAUFORT—HORSE TRADING—ALICE—LOVEDALE—ITS KAFFIR INSTITUTION—FORT BROWN—GRAHAMSTOWN—ITS PECULIARITIES —DEATH OF 'GLADSTONE'—PORT ALFRED—THE KOWIE—HOW I WENT TO 'SMILING SALEM.'

I LEFT Port Elizabeth at 7.45 in the evening, accompanied by Grab, Fry being late for the train; and the mid-day sun next day brightened the homesteads and gardens of Graaf Reinnett as we careered over the pride of the town—the new railway bridge, opened but a few days previously. Sam, who had gone before us, was waiting at the station with the waggon and team. But oh, what a falling off was there! The team had come from their unhappy feeding-grounds minus their halters and their flesh. Attenuation is not sufficiently strong a term to apply to the equine ghosts they appeared. The harness seemed to be holding their frames together, and I deemed it advisable to hurry them away from the exposed position they occupied, lest the playful breezes should blow all the forage they had eaten since their return through their gridiron-looking sides. No doubt the farmer who took them meant well by them, no doubt he gave them the run of his farm; but, gentle reader, should fate ever tempt you to 'run' your nags

Digitized by Google

on a farm in Southern Africa, assure yourself that there is something thereon to sustain their lives, and avoid putting them on places where the long-legged ostrich, multiplied by thousands, has enjoyed an exclusive right of pasturage, and has only stayed his appetite after gorging the second layer of stones.

The coats of my seven-horsepower engines would have made excellent shoe-brushes, and they affectionately leaned against one another for that union said to promote the strength they so much required. Sam shook his head sagely, and delivered himself oracularly thus: 'De Baas he'll see, they won't go six miles;' and gazing upon these four-legged specimens of 'poverty, hunger, and dirt,' I felt it was a statement of strongly probable truth.

A couple of days' good feeding, plenty of water, and the use of a brush and curry-comb, did something to brace up the poor brutes; and saying our last good-bye to the postmaster, whose stentorian laugh should make him a perpetual 'dead head' on the free list of anyone travelling 'with a show through Southern Africa,' we 'trekked' from Graaf Reinnett, and the evening found us 'outspanned' at Vorster's farm, where we passed the night.

'Hullo, Grab! how did you sleep?' said Fry, as our Russian friend, his head enveloped in a red worsted nightcap, crept out from under the waggon, where he had spent the night.

'Vell, I sleep pretty vell if it vos not for dem peegs dot vos loose.'

'Why, what did the peripatetic bacon do to you?'

'Vell, he not do noting; only when I was just off to sleep and vos dreaming of a ver nice girl in Port Eleesabess, just as I tink she give me a kiss, I vake and find dem old peegs, he put his noses under mine.'

Digitized by Google

'Being a Russian he thought you were accustomed to his s(k)nout,' said I, perpetrating a villainous attempt at a joke, an effort scarcely clear at the best, but pointless where Grab's perceptive faculties were concerned; but he growled a few anathemas at his nocturnal disturbers, and with the rough and ready style of a 'trooper' buried his head in the water-bucket to cleanse away the traces of his past night's visitation. That day we crossed the Milk River—though why so-called I failed to discover—and evening brought us to a 'drift' close to Pearston. The horses, whose previous five weeks' starvation had told on them, were completely done up, and leading one, whose miserable condition was made still worse by sickness, I pushed on for assistance. Before any could be secured the brutes had made a rally, and I saw them coming along to the little cluster of houses which form a nucleus for the town sometime or other to be built there. The horses were now more or less affected by the change of diet, or rather the change from starvation to comparative luxury, and began to suffer as a consequence. In travelling with horses in Africa, it is always as well to carry a small bag of wheat, an excellent check to choleraic symptoms, and which can be supplemented by a dose of chlorodyne. I have frequently administered half a small bottle of the latter with most satisfactory results to my horses, and it is an equally useful medicine where the human subject is concerned.

Next day's travel culminated at a place which to those who can spell is known as Brintjes Hooghte, and to those who can pronounce as Brinkeys Hookta, a mountain farm and hotel which we reached after much trouble, the horses sticking for three hours at one rise of the road.

Digitized by Google

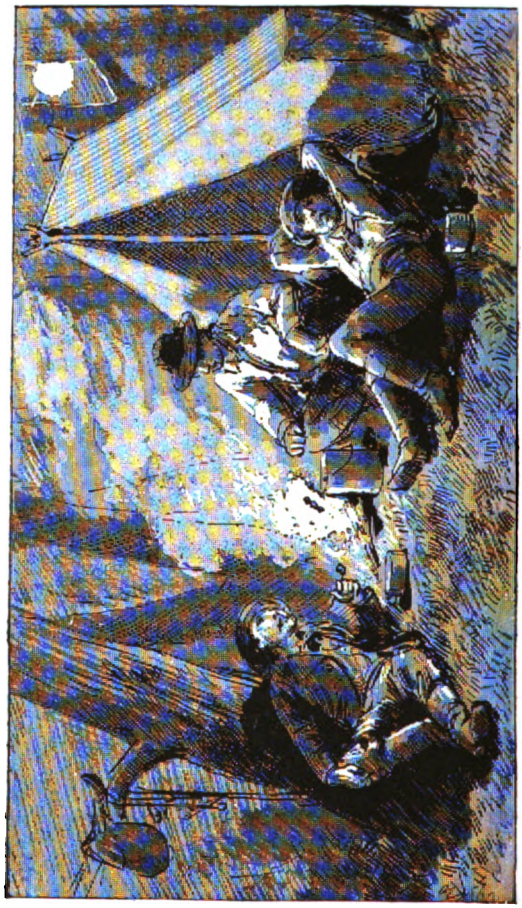
While speaking to the inmates of the hotel Sam came rushing in with a paler countenance than I had ever before seen bleached into his dark skin, saying, 'The grey horse, sir, is drowning in the dam;' and his story was correct, for on arrival at the dam we saw the gallant charger dead, having transformed himself into excellent stuffing for the 'aasrogels,' as the South African vultures are called. He had gone 'knee-haltered' into the water, and got into a deep hole, and unable to swim through the entanglement of the hopple, was immediately drowned; and, minus some thirty pounds worth of horseflesh, we returned to the waggon in time to pour a bottle of Boer brandy down the gullet of another brute who was panting with the cramp. A mountain road cut 1,500 feet from the valley, and running a couple of miles on the verge of a precipice, clad in the usual verdure of prickly pear, cacti, etc., brought us to one of the prettiest places in South Africa—the little town of Somerset East, situated at the foot of a handsome chain of mountains, in the picturesque kloofs of which tiger-cats, wild pigs, and bush-bucks still abound. Nothing of importance transpired during a two-day sojourn at this exceptionally pretty town; and early on the morning after the second day spent there, we 'trekked' for Bedford, and made our second 'outspan' at Cookhouse Drift, which was then the terminus of the Cradock extension railway. Its title, 'Cookhouse Drift,' may be now considered obsolete, for where the old 'drift' afforded passage-way through the Kowie River, now stands a handsome bridge; and looking at the steep descent to the former mode of crossing, I felt a generous feeling of gratitude to the Government for the very much more satisfactory method their viaduct suggested. The descent of that river-bank

Digitized by Google

was no easy one for the horses when free and loose they were driven down to the water, and had in most cases to be performed in Indian file.

The Kowie River runs through a deep valley, and the mountains rise boldly on either hand, the cacti and aloes covering their sides from base to summit. Cookhouse consisted of a brace of hotels, which, with the railway station and a couple of other buildings, constituted the town; but it is evidently an ambitious spot, judging from the style of its hotels, and I suppose will soon be petitioning for its rights as a municipality, with a mayor, town council, borough franchise, etc. Without a pang we bade it adieu, and after a stretch of mountain road we reached, long past sundown, a spot where we camped for the night. It was near a farm, and while sitting round a camp-fire a couple of fellows on horseback joined us. 'Free and easy' is the motto of South African up-country travelling, and we asked them to share our supper, which consisted of grilled bones, bread, and cocoa—the latter an excellent beverage, and one easily prepared, carried in the form of cocoa and milk. Our visitors departed, and, moving up cosily round our fire, we drew out Grab, who, with a good deal of volubility, related numerous adventures of his chequered career, all of which I believed until I found his description of the fight at Ulundi was scarcely in keeping with the fact that he had left the Frontier Light Horse before that occurrence took place, and, consequently, was present only in imagination on that auspicious occasion. However, he was a very good fellow, and outside the fact of a rather hasty temper, possessed some excellent qualities, not the least of which was sobriety. Our slumber was soothed by the cry of jackals. I never heard anything like it else-

Digitized by Google



Round the Camp Fire.

Digitized by Google

where; it seemed as if they infested the universe around, barking and whooping in choruses, and apparently in every direction. We placed the horses under a broken-down looking corrugated-iron shed, which did duty for a post-cart station, and two Kaffirs, who were the resident gentry thereabouts, lit up a brilliant fire, athwart which their dusky figures reared, and occasionally eclipsing the crackling blaze, formed a curious and weird picture. The following mid-day we reached Bedford, a small place possessing an eccentric doctor, a snake-charming magistrate's clerk, and a newspaper proprietor, with a small paper and a large bill. And here let me caution those who, in spite of danger and difficulty, contemplate piloting a 'show through Southern Africa,' to be perfectly explicit in their instructions to newspaper proprietors as to the size of advertisement they require inserted, whether double or single column, etc., or they may possibly find their modest desires of three or four inches of announcement expanded into a placard which fills up one side of the 'largest circulation,' and causes jubilee in the heart of the editor, by saving him a page of copy. The *Bedford Buster*, as it was locally called, was an enterprising sheet about the size of a moderate pocket-handkerchief, and on which my advent was heralded in the largest fount of type I presume the office possessed; and great was the wrath of the proprietor when I objected to pay for the half-page of his paper, to which space he had distended a comparatively small advertisement. But his ingenuity in pushing business had not ended here. He had copied the announcement into a Dutch edition he published, and, to crown all, he had repeated it in another issue of his literary thunderbolt, which I think came from the press about the same time that I appeared before the

Digitized by Google

public, both these latter efforts of his being entirely without instructions; he then gaily presented his bill, which as charged I resolutely refused to pay. I offered, however, to pay all the items charged except the three advertisements, which I proposed to settle (although two were unauthorized and unnecessary) at the same rate as the papers in the previous town, Somerset East. Eventually he accepted my offer, and after my leaving the town, I have reason to believe, inspired a libellous paragraph, which was sent anonymously to a number of newspaper proprietors, all of whom, I was pleased to discover, had an evidently just appreciation of their correspondent, and valued his malicious effort at its proper worth. One paragraph crept inadvertently into the columns of a leading Cape journal, whose editor hastened to make every reparation in his power, by not only publishing an apology in his own paper, but by advertising the full correspondence and explanation in a number of others. But that I felt it would be like breaking a butterfly on a wheel, or crushing a worm under a steam-hammer, and would only secure the time-worn result of endeavouring to extract blood from a turnip, I should have been tempted to try the effects of a little litigation upon my typographical acquaintance of Bedford, and have taught him the wickedness and impropriety of his ways, and made him consider himself very small beer indeed.

Being anxious to get away from a disagreeable subject we inspanned, and 'trekked' to Adelaide, where, 'neath the roof of Hazleton's Hotel, we soon forgot the *Buster;* its proprietor, and even the vision of the magistrates' clerk flinging puff adders around, regardless of consequences, while the doctor solemnly smoked, or spun a playful yarn, melted away into things of the

Digitized by Google

past; while mine host, an old Londoner, who for years had sailed between England and India, regaled us with a general conversation, in which the accentuation of the city of the Thames was distinctly visible; and next morning we had a very nice English breakfast with the old 'Baas,' at his 'Yellowwood's' Hotel, on the road to Fort Beaufort.

It was a long trying 'trek' to the latter place, and the horses were fairly fagged out on arrival, in fact we made rather a sorry exhibition, whipping and pushing the animals through the streets of the town. Fort Beaufort appears in its decadence. It is rather a serious town—Methodists and shoemakers seem to rule the roast here. The Good Templars are a power, and 'cango' (Cape brandy) is at a discount. It is prettily situated, and was the scene of many of the Kaffir wars of the past. Many a modern reader will ask how these wars came to be prolonged for such a period, and the answer is to be found in the fact that the heads of departments in those days were not more anxious for a termination of their golden opportunities than their successors of the present time.

'Ah,' said a venerable cleric who had spent a lifetime in Fort Beaufort, 'I remember putting the question to an officer in command, over an after-dinner glass of punch, "How is it that the war is not brought to a conclusion"?'

'"Look here," said he, pointing from the open window, '"do you see that bush there with the road winding through it?"

'"I do," said I.

'"Well, and do you see that broken waggon pulled off the road, and half hidden by the prickly pears and cactus?"

'"I do," said I.

Digitized by Google

'"Very well, that waggon has been worth a pound a day to me for the last two years, and I hope will be for the next. Have a cigar, and mix yourself another tumbler while we drink to the good time coming."'

A conversation which helps to dissipate the natural wonder exhibited as to the longevity of Kaffir wars.

An old 'blau schimmel,' or steel-grey horse, I swapped here for a fine block of an animal, who measured a yard and a quarter from his wither to his chest; and Fry, in a spirit of liberal enthusiasm, said, 'We'll call him "Gladstone," for he's a tower of strength.' His owner was not so sentimental as the Arab of the song, and speedily came to terms, accepting my nag and eight sovereigns to boot, and the 'tower of strength' became a wheel-horse in my team, and on we went to Alice.

We were fairly in Kaffir country now, and the natives became very numerous, were generally dressed in European clothes, and the female population went heavily in for bright-coloured handkerchiefs, which they wound round their woolly heads in a sort of semi-turban, semi-toque fashion. The principal point of interest about Alice is its proximity to the Lovedale Institution, where the native races receive tutelage in not only the ordinary branches of education, but in trades and handicrafts; and in order to gratify my curiosity respecting it, I rode over from Alice and was courteously received by the presiding genius of the place, Dr. Stewart, who, with his bright, pleasant-looking wife, seems to gladly welcome those who call upon them. With Dr. Stewart's guidance I went through the various departments, which include waggon-making, smith-work, joinering, printing, etc., and in each and all the workmanship was of a kind quite as well finished and turned out as that of

Digitized by Google

the handicraftsmen in any part of the colony. The printing was clean and the type well set; the machinery —a large Wharfdale cylinder press, and small ditto for jobbing work—had been recently engaged printing a Kaffir translation of 'Pilgrim's Progress,' a copy of which I brought away.

An immense amount of practical work is got through at this institution, which possesses a telegraphic wire to Grahamstown, with a Kaffir operator, who told me he had learned the Morse system in four months, and gave a sample of his knowledge of the instrument by reading and replying to a message while we were in the office. Lastly, I saw the books of the institution, and being told that they were kept by a European and a Kaffir, I was asked to say which were certain entries by. I naturally selected the best and least interlined and altered as the European's, and was wrong, the Doctor gently intimating that the Kaffir was rather the 'Baas' in the matter of bookkeeping. 'He came to us a boy, clad in an old shirt, and nothing else, and there he is,' said Dr. Stewart, with something like subdued satisfaction in his tones, and I felt bound to admit that he had something to show in favour of his theories respecting the future of the black man. We went to the Dining Hall to witness the inmates assembling for 'supper.' There they filed in, Basuto, Fingo, Tambookie, clad in European costume, all orderly, taking their places at the tables in the Commons Hall with perfect decorum, rising as with one effort when a signal-bell rang, and joining in an evening hymn before attacking the mealie-meal porridge smoking in their pannikins. Every man had his plate, spoon, tin drinking-cup, and had evidently been inducted into quite a civilized mode of life.

The reflection the scene suggested was that could this

Digitized by Google

kind of thing be multiplied a few thousand times over, some practical good might be the result; at present it is but a drop in an ocean. The influence of native barbarism is too widely extended; and that evil communication which is said to corrupt good manners sets in many cases such very indifferent examples, that the South African native, when brought into ordinary contact with the white man, generally succeeds in picking up the vices of the latter without troubling himself to annex his virtues also. Possibly this is owing to examples of the first being more numerous than the last, or that he finds the one agreeable and pleasant and the other irksome and slow.

In nine opinions out of ten you will find colonists denouncing what they call missionary Kaffirs in no measured terms, and there must be some grounds for so sweeping an opinion. But I feel persuaded that if missionary enterprise devoted itself more to the inculcation of the necessity of work and labour as the end of a useful life in lieu of the Scriptural theories of man's equality, the result might be more satisfactory.

Having to return to Alice by half-past six, I took farewell of Lovedale, and wishing success to Dr. Stewart, who kindly accompanied me down part of the road to show me the way, I gave the spur to my horse, and humming 'Alice, where art thou?' rode back under cover of nightfall to my hotel. The next morning we started for Grahamstown, and at the first river our horses stuck dead in the mid-stream, with the water well up to their shoulders. 'Sam' had to assume the Adamite garb and jump into the river, where he plied his long whip so vigorously that splashing, straining, and plunging up the bank the team went amidst a chorus of vituperation from the drivers.

Digitized by Google

On the road we met two Fingo Kaffirs, who afforded us some amusement. One was attired in a very limited flannel-shirt and nothing else; the other was gorgeously apparelled, having round his head a thick band of variegated beads through which his black wool projected in strings of the consistency of oakum; a second band with an edging of meercats' teeth crossed his forehead, and depending by a slender chain was a brass coin or medal which flapped about between his eyes. I was rather surprised to find on examination that this coin was none other than a French Catholic emblem, a medallion of the Sacred Heart, and bore upon it the words, 'Sainte Marie, réfuge des pécheurs, priez pour nous:' a somewhat dusky altar, that Fingo's forehead, whereon to rest a religious relic. He was an evident swell in his way, wearing three large bangle bracelets of some metal on his left wrist, a leather circlet and three large brass rings on his right, anklets of beads, a loose blanket which he carried on a long stick, and a sack made of steinbok-skins, gaily emblazoned with strips of thong, beads, etc. I traded with him for the latter which he handed over for a few shillings, taking care first to empty it of its contents, chiefly Kaffir pipes and tobacco. He and his comrade, the gentleman in the woollen shirt, executed a little stick fight for our edification, which was amusing; they then commenced to sing, which was not, and in the middle of their musical monotony we plied whip and rein and drove away. We spent the night at Fort Brown, a place of military significance in the old Kaffir wars, but scarcely recognisable as a stronghold to-day. A kind of hotel, kept by a lone female, probably a widow, and a broken-down old relic of a barrack, chiefly held by wayfaring Kaffirs, or wandering goats, marks the spot. From thence at

Digitized by Google

morning light we sped to Grahamstown, where, after a severe struggle with the horses, who objected to the mountainous road, we arrived at half-past three in the afternoon.

Grahamstown is known as the 'City of the Saints,' from, be it understood, an extreme piety exhibited by its early inhabitants. Possibly this feeling had died of inanition, or in the process of time's filtration become weakened to imperceptibility, or other causes may perhaps account for its pious decadence; but on my arrival I found it in the throes of an anything but 'saint-like' controversy, wherein were ranged, on the one side, the Bishop and his following, and on the other the Dean and his supporters. It was *guerre à outrance:* 'No compromise' was the watchword of either party. Personalities were freely indulged in, and after vainly endeavouring to understand what it was all about, the respective merits of the quarrel being poured into my ear by partisans of either party, I thought it wiser to give it up as an unsolvable enigma, and set myself to wondering why the place should be known as the 'Saints' City,' until I was obliged to give that up also. Nor was the mystery cleared away by the impressions derived from attending a *bal masqué* at the skating-rink a few nights after my arrival, where the paucity of attendance was more than compensated by the *chic* and 'go' exhibited.

A local writer says the chief characteristics of Grahamstown are respectability and pony-carriages. A witness in a celebrated criminal case years ago defined a gentleman as 'a man wot kept a gig;' and by inference, in the 'City of the Saints,' a pony-carriage is, I presume, the index of gentility. The town is undoubtedly one of the prettiest—many claim for it the

Digitized by Google

distinction of *the* prettiest—in South Africa, and has an air of steady respectability about it. The business men do not exhibit that nervous hurry which predominates with 'the Bayonians,' and perform their duties with more of the 'easy go' style, a peculiarity which increases with storekeepers and others the farther 'up country' you travel. As a residential town I am inclined to give the palm to Grahamstown. Situated healthily in the midst of really handsome scenery, well planted with trees, supplied with schools and colleges, replete with comfortable and in many cases elegant residences, the 'City of the Saints' (and sprinkling of sinners) is quite an agreeable place of abode.

While here I arranged to visit Port Alfred—or 'The Kowie,' as it is better known—the coming port of Grahamstown, situated some thirty miles from the latter, at the mouth of the river from which it takes its name. In a weak hour I also consented to visit another dove-cot, called Salem—or, to use the local term, 'Smiling Salem'—a cluster of houses lying, being, and situate at an angle of about twenty-five from the direct line between Grahamstown and 'The Kowie.'

'Look here, old man,' says an intelligent friend: 'you're not going to try and get to the Kowie with that four-wheeled waggon, are you?'

'Well, yes,' said I. 'Why not?'

'Why not? Because it's quite as much as the post-cart can do to work through the road—sand all the way.'

While this conversation was going forward, a Kaffir boy, who had been herding the horses in a field where they were grazing, came up and said one of them was lying down sick. I went down and found the new horse 'Gladstone' in his death-throes; and it was really

Digitized by Google

sad to be compelled to stand by and witness the magnificent-looking brute kicking out his giant strength in evident agony, with the feeling of inability to afford him relief impressed upon me. In a quarter of an hour he was dead. We had bled him, and the blood scarcely seemed to come; and my suspicion is that his death was due to the carelessness of the grooms in giving him whole mealies (maize) and allowing him to drink water shortly afterwards. Many horses are annually lost through this want of caution. The animal swallows some mealies without chewing them, and then taking water into the stomach, they swell and distend the intestines, with a similar result to that accruing to my 'Premier.'

We borrowed another horse, and went to 'The Kowie;' and though the work was severe, the roads being bad enough, we succeeded, before the afternoon closed, in making the little port which lives in hopes of becoming a miniature Liverpool. It is a convict-station, and the gangs of evil-doers were working away, blasting rocks, quarrying, and in other ways assisting the completion of the new line of railway from Grahamstown to the port. A number of constables, clad in blue serge jackets, white helmets, and carrying long Snider rifles and sword-bayonets, guard the prisoners as they work. Your eye catches sight of these guards moving about on pinnacles of the rocks and kloofs surrounding the quarries; their white helmets and weapons suddenly flash out of the jungle with which the hill-sides are clothed.

The life must be terribly monotonous for the class of men engaged in it. I was told that they comprised a curious assortment of persons, good, bad, and indifferent—principally the latter. Amongst them are

Digitized by Google

some sprigs of nobility; and one was mentioned as a nephew of an English lord justice; another as the grandson of a late field-marshal whose name is associated with the last European war England was engaged in; a third formerly held a captain and adjutant's commission in a crack cavalry regiment, and having come to entire grief financially, was still serving his country in a less glorious, but perhaps equally useful, manner.

The aspirations of Port Alfred are retarded by the eternal curse of South African eastern ports—a bar of sand at the river-mouth; and when I was there a small steam-tug was stranded upon this very bar, and defied all efforts to get her off; and a number of wrecks on the side beach demonstrated the fact that danger and difficulty must be encountered by the mariners who carelessly attempt to make this little port. We stayed two nights at Port Alfred, and on the second of these I bought another horse—a 'rooi schimmel' (red roan) —from the Head-Constable, who, I am bound to admit, gave me excellent value in horse-flesh for the sum he asked; and I may mention here that I received much courtesy from the Civil Commissioner and others connected with the Court Building, the public hall of 'The Kowie.'

Determined, in spite of all obstacles, to fulfil the promise I had made to visit Salem, the 'City of Peace,' I ordered my team to be 'spanned in' at the conclusion of my second night's performance at Port Alfred, and to 'trek' by the light of Cynthia's silver orb for the promised haven of rest. At 11.30 p.m. we were prepared to start, myself in the saddle, and six full-blooded, fiery, untamed equine sons of the desert 'spanned in.' Down to the pont we went, and after some delay, as the pont-

Digitized by Google

keeper had been the victim of misplaced confidence in a belief that his head was considerably harder than the fists of an infuriated, gin-excited publican, sinner, or ship-captain—a theory which had resulted in reducing the ponteer's visage to a shapeless mass, in which the ensanguined element of life's current was blended with battered cuticle, extravasated tissue, and what eyes he had left were anything but 'right'—we reached the floating bridge. The pontkeeper had sufficient *nous* left to discover that there were seven horses instead of six, for which he had previously charged. Disgorging the additional coin, and invoking speedy convalescence to his mummy-like countenance, we drove on to the pontoon; and while gliding over the Kowie River, and gazing down at the stranded tug at the bar, we sang 'A Life on the Ocean Wave;' and amid the kind farewells of our friends, the usual roars to the horses of 'right, right,' which is generally synonymous with 'wrong, wrong,' we climbed the hill, and on we went to Salem.

O shade of Macadam! O Julius Cæsar, that did of old construct Roman roads in conquered territories! O Brunel! O contractor of the Tay Bridge! why did you not reserve your genius in road and bridge manufacture for that splendid tract of country between the Kowie and Salem? Sand, sand, sand—rut, rut, rut—splash, splash, splash. 'Get out and turn the wheels; pull 'em round again, Sam; give that leader the sjambok; push that wheel horse to the left. Now, then, all together! Hie! go on, gee! right, right!' Once again we moved, quite three-quarters of an inch that time; we shall do it in time; perseverance is a great thing. Two feet in three-quarters of an hour; progressing slowly, but still progressing, and with steady resolve, mingled with heavy

Digitized by Google

drops of perspiration, cruelty to animals, profanity, lashings, crashings, dashings, and splashings, we wended our way from the Kowie to Salem.

After about three hours and a half of this exhilarating and health-giving mode of travel, we found ourselves in ten inches of sand, and having mentally prayed that a few East London camels or Uitenhage elephants would pass our way, we sank overpowered with exertion, and slept where we lay—on the road to Salem.

Morning came, and at it we went again, aided by three Kaffirs clad in their native chastity, and who, suborned by small libations of 'Three-Star' brandy, twisted the wheels as though they would twist them off. We reach a bit of good road, or, as our studies in ivory and black call it, *mooi pad*, and away we go. Good-bye, old oyster, Saul Solomon's full-flavoured *native;* re-envelope thy manly form in thy red-clay blanket; let that cup of 'French' warm up thy digestive organs. We shall see you no more; we are now fairly off on the road to Salem. Eh, what! Crack, swish, go on—right; stuck again, by the living Jingo! which is strong language, but I hope not unparliamentary. More sinewy exertion —twist the wheels. All futile—give it up; but stay, a gleam of *dark* appears in the distance.

> 'They come, those wild Kaffirs, so airy and strong;
> They'll shortly be with us; we'll soon get along;
> Their blankets they'll cast on the ground at our feet,
> And succour secure to our coursers so fleet.'

And they arrive, and they won't give a hand without receiving *geld*—money. This is the last straw, half a bottle of 'Three-Star' already down their savage throats, and, like eaten bread, soon forgotten. The leaven of civilization has entered their souls, and they want to be

Digitized by Google

paid. So be it. Give 'em a 'tickey'* apiece. What! they won't take it? Well, hang the expense! double the price. Offer accepted; more savage muscular force expended, and again we go off, on the road to Salem.

Haylesbury's, a roadside hotel, is reached at last, as the sun is sinking fast to the horizon's verge, and having interviewed the 'Baas,' he puts us on the shortest road to Salem.

We find, after a mile or two, that we have no landmarks to follow, and we push on to a farm, owned by one Webber by name. We send up to inquire the road to Salem. No one there to answer but a pig, who grunts an affirmative to each question asked. The post-cart bugle! Saved! Now we shall surely find the shortest and most expeditious road to Salem. Post-cart comes up, and facetious passengers suggest niggers to pull waggon and show way simultaneously. We go on to next farm—more Webbers. 'Oh what a tangled Web(ber) we weave when first we practise to deceive' ourselves that this night we shall probably reach Salem!

Oh yes; it is all right; the drift is down there (looks about five miles deep), and the road is on the other side up there (about ten miles high). Forward! the brow of the hill is reached; the descent is easy. Yes, very easy to roll down. The sun, no longer emitting rays of heat, sinks quickly from our sight, and with a sigh of anguish and a tear of regret we sorrowfully turn our horses' heads, and bid a sad farewell to the mysterious road to Salem.

Moral: To persons of sane mind, corporeal health, and otherwise properly constituted! If you should, in a fit of eccentricity, be induced to visit the Kowie, and

* Colonial term for a threepenny piece.

Digitized by Google

thence desire to complete your experience of travel by a voyage to Salem, take the advice of one who has *not* been, and engage and set free the captive balloon from Paris, secure that splendid paddle-wheel steamer the *Great Eastern*, wait till the railway is open, or stay at home and commit to your memory the foregoing experiences of the road.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE ROAD—FISH RIVER—BREAKFAST VLEY—KING WILLIAMSTOWN—A V.C. PRESENTATION—EAST LONDON—CATHCART—QUEENSTOWN—AMATEUR WHEELWRIGHTS—TARKASTADT—A BAR-ROOM SCENE—LIVELY EDITING—CRADOCK AGAIN—MARAISBURG—STEYNSBURG—A PLEASANT JOURNEY—BURGHERSDORP—AFRICAN CRICKET—DORDRECHT—A TROPICAL HIBERNIAN—AN UNPLEASANT JOURNEY—JAMESTOWN—A GERMAN HOST—ALIWAL NORTH—WITH THE CAPE MOUNTED RIFLES—BREAKING CAMP—THE FREE STATE AGAIN—ROUXVILLE—MY LICENSE—SMITHFIELD—REDDERSBURG—A MODEL PRISON.

We camped the night on Webber's farm, and returned in the morning to Grahamstown, and the following day we started on a long 'trek' of some eighty miles to King Williamstown. We crossed the Great Fish River by a fine bridge, and 'trekked' thence to Breakfast Vley, our projected halting-place for the night. The ground was continuously a rising one. The horses worked well until we reached the foot of a steep rise, on the crown of which our goal was visible, when they struck dead, and no inducements, threats, or whippings could persuade the brutes into a final effort. A half-coloured transport rider came swinging down the hill alongside his bullock waggon, and overtures were made to him to give us a pull up with his team, which he promised to do. Not returning in a respectable time, our trusty Russian-Pole was sent down the hill to interview him. We could hear their voices engaged in wordy war, and

Digitized by Google

shortly after the ox team making its appearance, Grab and the 'Baas' engaged in earnest conversation during the ascent of the hill. The oxen were yoked in and slowly we reached our destination, a roadside hotel kept by a Mrs. Watson, who is quite a character herself. It appeared, when Grab overtook the ox-waggon, its worthy owner had no intentions of returning, and a little diplomacy was brought into play to overcome his faithlessness. Grab, who may fairly be forgiven the falsehood, told Mr. Off-coloured-waggon-driver that I was none other than Sir Jacob Dirk Barry, the Judge, going his circuit, that Fry was the Attorney-General accompanying me, and nothing short of six months in the chain-gang at 'The Kowie' would be the result of his refusing to pull up my waggon and its load of legal majesty. His ruse was a success, and we slept at the hotel, after a good forty miles of our journey had been completed. This Breakfast Vley was a position held by Colonial volunteers during the Galeka war; but the old Welshwoman who owned the place stuck to her post, with or without guard, and was generally reckoned a fair match for a small tribe of Kaffirs, if provided with a frying-pan and a broomstick. During the next day's travel we 'outspanned' near a native kraal, and were not long engaged in the operation of cooking breakfast before we were joined by the chief of the village and a few young Kaffirs. Fry performed some amateur conjuring feats, in the way of palming and changing coin, and the surprise and interest of the old fellow were intense when a silver half-crown was apparently transformed into a copper penny. They were friendly, and ate whatever was given to them with a proper appetite, and evident signs of digestive appreciation, and would have no doubt reciprocated our

Digitized by Google

hospitality if they had been able to do so; but we drew on them only for some green mealies, which, with salt, pepper, and butter, after a few hours' morning 'trekking' over South Afric's Veld, are an article of diet calculated to seduce an epicure. At King Williamstown, which we reached after nightfall, we met a wing of the Cape Mounted Rifles, or C.M.R., as they are more familiarly called, and, as this force had been so long and well-known in the United Kingdom, I was somewhat curious to see what it was like. One might suppose, from the announcements of interested recruiting agencies at home, that existence in this exceptionally advantageous corps was an annual revel, a hunter's feast, an *al-fresco* picnic; that riding of gallant horses, shooting of the fleet-footed antelope, a handsome uniform, and five shillings a day constituted the elements of a life free from the restraints of cities. But, reader into whose hands this book may fall, who may possibly be yearning for stirring scenes such as these, strip most of the elements of romance away at once. Believe me that the major portion of that weedy-looking nag you will have to groom down when the bugle sounds, will have to be paid for by you out of your magnificent pay; that there are numbers of other calls upon that stupendous emolument which reduce it to a most infinitesimal amount; and as a consumption of strong drinks, if not exactly a part of a trooper's constitution, is very often a decided habit, and as those refreshing beverages, distinguished as 'French,' 'Three Star,' 'Irish,' 'Scotch,' etc., are from twice to three times the home prices when purchased in South Africa, I leave you to judge what are the probabilities of your saving a retiring fortune out of your five shillings a day.

Riding you will certainly have, and that too under a

Digitized by Google

broiling sun; and if you substitute Kaffirs for antelopes you will probably enjoy some shooting, the principal drawback to which is that the Kaffir has a *penchant* for similar amusement, to which he superadds a proclivity for dissection, his assegai being his scalpel, and you his subject.

The 'C.M.R.' are undoubtedly a smart body of men. Call them Mounted Infantry, Light Horse, or what you will, they combine the offensive points of both these, and are soldier-like and, for the purposes of South African warfare, the right men in the right place; and it was with real pleasure I saw them fully paraded to witness the investment of one of their number with that highest badge of valour, the Victoria Cross, an honour he had secured by distinguished bravery at the attack on Moroisis Mountain. He was of Swedish origin, though a more English name it would be hard to find—Peter Brown. And in conversation with him afterwards, he said he did not think so much of the act for which he had received the cross. 'I often ran greater risks,' said he; 'and if I hadn't been so badly wounded, it would have escaped notice.' His act was one, however, in which courage and humanity were both exhibited, having rushed out in front of the fighting line with water to a couple of wounded comrades.

I remained a week in King Williamstown, a rather straggling place, the principal one in British Kaffraria; native kraals and villages thickly dotting the landscape around. A large Kaffir trade is carried on here, and numbers of the old German Legion have holdings in the vicinity, and their little farms are easily distinguishable by their thorough tillage and cultivation, patches of fertility in expanses of waste. A similar class of country lies between King Williamstown and its port—East London, or Panmure, or East London East and East

Digitized by Google

London West, for by all these titles it is known. The usual sand-bar blocks the entrance to the Buffalo River, a fine deep stream in which the *Great Eastern* could swing. If man's ingenuity and engineering skill can conquer that fatal drawback, the bar, East London will give a clean pair of heels to the opposition ports on South Africa's Eastern coast, and leave them quite distanced in the race for comfortable harbour and docks. I boated up the river for a mile or two ; its banks—steep, and covered thick with foliage—are decidedly handsome, and one or two little creeks afford a grateful shelter from the mid-day sun. The town of East London, or Panmure, was in a very chrysalis condition, consisting of a number of buildings squatted on a sand-heap ; and as you walked its streets, it required no great stretch of imagination to fancy the shore-sand was paying a visit to the town. The railway ran from here to Queenstown, and returning to King Williamstown for my horses and waggon, which we put into trucks, we pushed forward to the former place, staying one night at a small place called Cathcart to break the journey. There is some fine engineering work on the line between Cathcart and Queenstown—the latter one of the nicest towns in the colony, though seen to much disadvantage by me, owing to the burnt-up appearance of the surrounding Veld and hill-tops through sun and drought. Four days we lingered amongst a very friendly people, and then started for Cradock, *viâ* Tarkastadt. A long day's travel terminated after nightfall at a roadside house or hotel, some two or three hours from our destination, and where we arrived just in the nick of time ; for we had scarcely brought our team to a stand, when it was discovered that the tire of one of the front wheels was almost off. Have you ever on

Digitized by Google

a very freezing dark night, with the aid of a big axe-hammer and a flickering lantern to light your labour, tried to drive a cold tire back upon the wheel from which it has become loosened? If you have not, and desire to see what limits of perseverance and temper you possess, try it; if you have, it will require no description of mine to recall the furious onslaughts you have made on that unhappy ring of iron; of how, time after time, you have given up in blank despair; of the bad language the effort has evoked; of the perspiration it has produced; of the ingenuity it has discovered, or of the triumphant feelings a successful issue has awakened as you told your 'boy' to throw the blank thing into the 'spruit,' to let the wood swell up and tighten the grip before morning. Something of this was our experience, with the privilege of chopping the wheel out of the 'spruit,' where it had been carefully frozen during the night-time in three inches of solid ice—and this in the land of 'burning fountains,' etc., as the old hymn has it! The water-bucket at the waggon-side had half an inch of ice in it, and at daybreak I put a cup of cocoa down on the ground while I went to drive back a straying horse, and on my return in half an hour could almost stand my spoon upright in the chocolate ice my breakfast liquid had become.

Tarkastadt is a small place, and our visit there was chiefly memorable by one or two incidents which transpired, and which set 'society,' as represented by a few bank clerks, magistrates' ditto, a handful of store-keepers, hotel proprietors, etc., fairly in a blaze. An individual connected with one of the banking institutions conceived the idea of publicly affronting a young married lady, much given to wearing magenta colours, by dressing himself in a crimson tie, gloves and hand-

Digitized by Google

kerchief to match, and bows and rosettes of the same hue decorating his shoes, and thus attired, taking up a seat in her vicinity, with the apparent desire of directing attention to her taste in colours. This plan he carried out the first evening of my entertainment, and being unaware of the object of this curious style of evening dress, I regarded him as a sort of harmless lunatic, an opinion subsequent events failed to alter. He put in an appearance afterwards at the hotel, and while admiring himself in the bar mirror, was overhauled by the affronted lady's husband,. and the 'Battle of Magenta' appeared likely to be fought over again. Like most ungentlemanly snobs, he apparently added the further attribute of being a coward, for after having a very serious number of threats hurled at him, and expressions of contempt profusely distributed over him by the irate husband, who promised a satisfactory cowhide would be introduced the next time he developed his sartorial eccentricity, he eventually sought refuge in his bank-building, where, it is to be supposed, he locked himself up in the strong-box for safety. He might have congratulated himself upon escaping with an entire skin; many a man would have horsewhipped him first, and asked him to apologize afterwards. But the cup of his retribution was not yet full; for he had contrived to awaken the wrath of the editor of the local paper, a modest sheet with a proportionate circulation, the whole of which I assisted the editor to print, as his machinery (a Kaffir boy) had gone wrong; so I inked, and he pulled, until the 'largest circulation' was all off the press—inside half-an-hour's time. The proprietor combined the elements of editor, reporter, foreman, compositor, steam-power, etc.; and speaking of his little experience of the night before, in his next day's issue, thus got off his

Digitized by Google

superfluous bile in the following 'spicy' paragraph, which for pure straightforward go-to-the-point writing can scarcely be excelled. The name of the person referred to, as well as the institution he was connected with, were fully given in the original, which, in charity, I withhold in the following copy :

'Mr. ——, an accountant in the —— Bank here, and *no doubt a gentleman*, insisted upon a lady rising from her seat at Mr. Du Val's entertainment last evening, because he had engaged it. It is the first time we ever heard of such gentlemanly "politeness." None but a "cad" would be guilty of such conduct, and none but a "puppy" would attempt to go to an entertainment with "red gloves." We only regret that two gentlemen, for whom we have the highest personal esteem, should be in the society of such a snob at the entertainment.' Thus spake, in tones of injured feeling, the Tarkastadt thunderer ; bidding bank clerks quake, and hotel 'bosses' tremble in their canteen bars.

We next returned to Cradock, and left by moonlight after the performance at 11.30 o'clock, outspanning for rest at three in the morning. At mid-day we reached Maraisburg, an ultra-Dutch village, where the Boers, their 'vrouws' and 'kinders,' formed the chief part of the audience, and crowded the only available room—a large schoolroom—to its utmost limits. Thence to Steynsburg —first cousin in appearance to Maraisburg—where after a two days' sojourn we started for Burghersdorp. The day was all that could be desired. We gave a Steynsburg man a seat in the waggon. The Veld during part of the day's travel was alive with springbok and blesbok, and we took long-shots at them, with the effect of seeing them spring into the air and disappear into the mirage which bounded the horizon. The hotel proprietor, Mr.

Digitized by Google

Brady, sent his Hottentot groom on horseback to meet us, which he did some miles out of the town; and Grab, having volunteered to exchange his coach-seat for the saddle of 'Tottie,' the latter mounted the box of the waggon, and the Russian was soon in the leather—but not for long. He rode ahead, the horse being very fresh, and distance and darkness soon hid him from our view. But we soon overtook him, minus his mount, which he explained had taken advantage of his misplaced confidence in getting off to tighten a girth, and was now—'vell, I don't know vere he is,' to use his own words and method of pronunciation. We all sallied over the Veld. 'Here he is,' said one; 'no, it's a bush.' 'Steady, boy! so, then—way, now!' said another, addressing his soothing adjuration to a boulder stone, which, in fast-falling night-shadows, looked as like a horse as anything else. We did come on him at last, and one of the party got up almost within grasping-distance, when, with a swish and a snort, he sent his heels flying into the air, and said 'Good-bye.' We gave it up as fruitless; but his owner sent out a couple of his Kaffirs next morning, and they brought him safely home, his saddle not being improved by an evidently determined course of rolling to which it had been submitted. Burghersdorp differed little from most of the smaller South African towns. A good sprinkling of Germans live here, and it possessed a newspaper proprietor with a very Hibernian name. I think I will reproduce it, and see how you can stand it, reader mine: 'Saint Patrick O'Shaughnessy O'Brien' he was hight. And as his advertising charges were small, his virtues were in an inverse ratio.

The threatened Basuto war was the burning topic of conversation in Burghersdorp; and as the question of

Digitized by Google

'going to the front,' was one which concerned all persons included in the list of burghers and yeomen, the dinner-table conversations were more or less bloodthirsty. Some young fellows were full of enthusiasm at the prospects of change a campaign held out; but the older hands, who had enjoyed a previous ten months' sojourn at the foot of Moroisi's Mountain, were not quite so anxious to renew acquaintance with an existence which, when not oppressively monotonous, was probably charged with danger. One young fellow, however, was apparently determined to minimise the amount of his discomfort as much as possible by taking to the 'front' his Cape-cart laden with a goodly freight of what he considered necessaries, including an iron bedstead and bedding to match, a foot-bath, a small library of books, a fishing-rod and tackle, as though he anticipated having quite a jolly time of it when the day arrived that duly set forth the legitimate hour for 'Basuto shooting' had commenced. When I saw him stowing a hat-case into the back of his cart, I mildly suggested that a warm-water bottle for his feet and a couple of pairs of lavender kid gloves might prove useful additions to his already luxurious field-baggage; or, as it was possible the Basuto Chief Masupha might probably extend to him the hospitality of his dining-room mahogany when engaged in the gastronomic festivity of 'eating up' some loyal Kaffirs, he might safely add a swallow-tailed coat and bundle of white ties to put in a *comme il faut* appearance should such opportunity present itself. All were in good spirits, and on the invitation of the captain of the local eleven I tried a little South African cricket, which, played on a butt covered with cocoa-nut matting, was to me a novel experience.

Sam came to grief in Burghersdorp, owing to the

Digitized by Google

common evils of drink and disobedience. It was the last night of our stay, and the start on the following morning was arranged for daybreak. In order to satisfy myself that all was right, I visited the stable before turning in, and found half the horses loose and roaming about the yard, the groom having settled himself to sleep, from which I roused him somewhat unceremoniously, and forcibly ejected him from the premises. This entailed the doing of his work; and two o'clock in the morning saw Fry and myself chopping forage and stowing it away in bags for the road. We were up at daybreak, and Fry holding the reins and Grab the driving-whip, we started for Dordrecht before Burghersdorp had wakened from its second sleep. After a longish day's travel, in which a slight smattering of Cape Dutch came in useful, as non-English-speaking people reside principally in the country hereabouts, we arrived just before sundown at a roadside farm, the proprietor of which advised us to push on to a small river a few miles forward, where we could 'outspan' for the night. It soon became intensely dark, and slowly and carefully we plodded on, walking myself in front to try and keep the road; and eventually the croaking of frogs told us that we were near water of some kind, so we cried 'halt.' The night was intensely cold, and the horses, tied up to the waggon, were so restless that sleep was next to impossible to its inmates; and, indeed, we were obliged several times to get up and give the poor brutes more forage to try and put artificial warmth into them by the process of digestion.

I never thought horses could stow away such a quantity of provender, and the road-supply looked a very limited quantity when daylight revealed its diminished size to our astonished gaze. We had an ice break-

Digitized by Google

fast, the water in the bucket being frozen an inch thick; and, to crown our gratification, we discovered that we had come about half a dozen miles out of our road, the consequent retracing of part of which and further cross-country experiences made our arrival in Dordrecht an evening instead of a morning one.

Dordrecht possesses a fine water-supply; in fact, the largest 'vley' of any of the lesser towns, and is a small but plucky little place. We were now on the borders of Basutoland, and as fighting was expected any minute, the 'burning question' was the topic; but even that was for a time forgotten in the more serious strife caused by my arrival and consequent request of entrance to the Town Hall—a very modest building, which had been a school or a chapel, and was now being promoted by the aid of a local painter into all the grandeur and responsibility of a 'Staats Huis.' The painter had a contract to embellish the walls of the building and make other alterations, which he had completed; but the council had not formally taken over the work, hence the difficulty. Damage might accrue from my occupation. Council wouldn't take over responsibility; local decorator refused key of building; indignant protest of myself listened to attentively, and remonstrances offered; arrival of local Michael Angelo on scene; persuasive powers exerted by me, together with guarantee of 'filthy lucre' down; happy ending, and 'the key'—a trophy of diplomacy. It was rather a scramble to be ready in time, and the carrying down of an iron-backed piano by some eight or ten natives, 'bossed up' by myself, was an event requiring a good deal of determination and the exercise of some physical force in order to keep cohesive the Kaffir power necessary to bring the instrument safely to its destination.

Digitized by Google

Another 'O'Brien' was the owner of the local paper, and he had lately returned from a visit to Ireland, where he had been for the first time, and his story of a clergyman there to whom he carried letters of introduction, and who exclaimed *sotto voce* to a friend, *that he was not bad for a Hottentot*, and a few other yarns about the 'ould counthry,' helped to close-in my first night's acquaintance with the little town of Dordrecht.

We remained three days, and groomless we drove away in a blinding dust-storm, which seemed to increase in its intensity as the day wore on. It was difficult to keep the horses moving through it, as it drove right into their eyes and nostrils. It filled the waggon, it blinded the occupants; at times it was impossible to see the wheel-horses' heads, whilst the leaders and middle of the team were entirely indistinguishable, making progress absolutely dangerous.

After struggling along for a few miles we 'outspanned' on the side of an elevated plateau, over which the wind swept fiercely. It was impossible to feed the horses in the canvas manger—as fast as the forage was put in it was swept out and scattered about, until the region around suggested that a multitude of Ophelias had gone mad there and scattered their straws with a lavish hand. A cold, sleeting rain then came down, driven fiercely by the storm-blasts, and we 'inspanned' the horses, now doubly unwilling to work; and dragging the leaders by their heads, we struggled along a sandy road, which became every instant heavier with the wet. I plodded myself for half a dozen miles as 'voorlooper,' or leader; and cold, wet through, the horses utterly fagged, and general discomfort reigning around, we arrived at Jamestown, a cheerless cluster of about a

Digitized by Google

dozen buildings, comprising three or four stores, an apology for a church, and no apology for an hotel. 'Any port in a storm' is a sailor's motto, and a roof of any kind may be acceptable to a landsman under similar circumstances; therefore, with our barometer changing to fair, we entered the 'hotel.' Mine host, a native of Germany, came over with the Foreign Legion, no doubt to the gratification of his friends at home; and having thrown down the sword, took up the brandy bottle, which he wielded with equal, if not superior, ability. His hotel was a truly cheerful place; he said he had no fire at which we could dry our clothes, and judging from the temperature of the decoction of broom and sage-brush that he was pleased to style tea, we believed him. He was very anxious to sell me a pair of ancient 'screws' he called horses, and dilated upon their manifold virtues in adjectives of profound strength and impressive character. He was exceedingly irritated next morning when I routed him up to get some forage for the horses. Finding all, or nearly all, the doors locked with a gaol-like propriety throughout the house, I had knocked at a few rooms, calling out 'Baas,' before I reached the right one. I put an end to his reproaches in a somewhat curt fashion; and having fed my own horses and declined his proffered ones for the last time, we bade adieu to Jamestown and its German host, trusting that the hotel and proprietor were not samples of how they manage those things in the 'Vaterland' at home.

The next evening we reached Aliwal North, situated on the Orange River, and next-door neighbour to the Free State. The place was full of the Cape Mounted Rifles, whose camp was visible on the other side of the river, and who were hourly expecting the orders to

Digitized by Google

march into Basutoland. The dinner-table at the hotel, attended by a large number of the C. M. R., who had leave from camp, was a lively scene; and the route having come for next day, the town was still more lively, and free fights, window demolition, and other little eccentricities, the results of exuberance of spirits, animal and ardent, were the rule and not the exception. The boys must give vent to their pent-up feelings sometimes, and a broken head or two and a few panes of glass, more or less, does not amount to a very serious matter, especially when there is no telling whether they will ever come back from the country whither they are bound; and one of them told me that he had been stationed away at the front and had not seen a town for two years and five months. After seeing a Scotch party singing 'Auld Lang Syne,' with Highland honours, I turned in; and my last recollections, ere falling off to sleep, were a confused jumble of toasts, sentiments, shaking of hands, blacking of eyes, throwing of bottles, smashing of windows, stentorian choruses, and general devil-may-caredom throughout the town.

I engaged a new groom in Sam's place here—he was 'Julius' by name, and lazy by nature; and beyond being a good whip, about as unsatisfactory an addition to my party as could be found; but the continual care and attention the horses required made the services of an indifferent man better than none. The C. M. R. broke camp at early morning, and I went across the river on horseback to say farewell to a few of them whom I had personally met, and was surprised to find myself about the only person from the town who had thought it worth while to see them start, and offer them a word of good cheer. There was one of the principal hotel-keepers there certainly, but his errand was to

Digitized by Google

fortify by identification a claim he had made against certain members of the corps for damage sustained by reason of about half a handcart which had been projected through his front parlour window.

Some of the lads, it appeared, were nearly drowned returning to camp, as they went into the river instead of across the bridge; and had it not been for a friendly sandbank, would probably have spoiled their internal grog by the addition of a surplusage of water.

Aliwal boasts some natural hot springs, and in company with a friend I went out and bathed in them. The sensation while swimming about is luxurious; but that dreadful minute on the bank when you come out, and the cool wind sweeping over the 'Veld' catches the skin, is too great a penalty to pay for the previous enjoyment; added to which, the odour is sulphureous and non-agreeable, and necessitates a thorough washing afterwards, lest your entry to the dining-room at the hotel may create a natural inquiry as to where you have come from, and the eyes of curious guests look for the traditional hoofs and horns associated with the ancient party who is supposed to have the monopoly of such perfumes.

Rouxville, a little town in the Free State, was our next place of call, distant but a few hours from Aliwal; and on my arrival I discovered that since my former visit the 'Volksraad' had passed a bill making it necessary to take out a license to give entertainments, for which the modest sum of £15 per annum was charged. I took out the license, and felt that in lieu of inflicting a penalty upon public entertainers for endeavouring to amuse the Boers, the Government might better have offered a subsidy to the courageous individual undertaking the task. Being the first person who took out

Digitized by Google

such a license under this enlightened act of the Volksraad, I submit, in all its native beauty and chastity of diction, what must needs be considered now an historic document. Be careful, gentle reader, how you attempt the pronunciation of its mysterious contents. Personally, I succeeded in dislodging the stopping of two teeth the first time I tried it, and was medically warned that lock-jaw might attend a persistence in the attempt.

It is as follows:

'ORANJE VRIJSTAAT.

'Distrikt Rouxville. (Seal.)

'No. 157. *Licentie.*

'Verleend op heden, den 9 Augustus, 1880, aan den Heer C. DU VAL, wonende te ....., voor Tooneelspelen en andere vermogelijkheden.

'S. P. DE BEER, Landdrost.

'Voor den tij van 6 maanden.

'N.B.—De Licentie te worden uitgereikt overeenkomstig de beestaande Wetsbepalingen ten opzigt van verschillende bedrijven.'

The Landrost (magistrate) was a good-natured, jolly-looking fellow, who seemed to have walked out of one of those old Flemish pictures, and been inducted into modern clothes. We extracted some considerable fun out of the filling up of the license, and parted the best of friends. The Volksraad tax everything heavily except land—as being all proprietors themselves they take special care that the revenue will not come out of their pockets. Hotel and billiard license runs up to £75 per annum. Doctors, lawyers, traders, all pay heavy license dues, while the Boer stalks abroad over his thousands of acres, and pushing his hands deeply into his capacious breeches-pockets, jingles his coins therein with the satisfied air of a man who doesn't care

Digitized by Google

where they get the money to govern with so long as they don't get it out of him.

Smithfield, our next halt, was quietude itself, and possesses an Assembly Room, the walls of which are entirely covered with cuttings from the *Graphic, London News*, and other illustrated papers. We had a slight snowstorm when starting from here, and collided in it with a wandering Cape Mounted Rifleman, looking for strayed horses; and wishing him luck, we rattled merrily away over a fairly level road to Reddersburg. We were told that we would get to a 'winkel' (shop) about an hour and a half from the town; so towards evening we kept a sharp look-out ahead for the 'uitspan' —hoping to get a shed to put the horses in, as the night was very cold. Whether we missed that 'winkel' or not, I cannot say, but we debouched somewhat suddenly upon a small cluster of houses, and were at our destination sooner than we anticipated. Yes, the town in all its glory, and the centre of a townless, sparsely populated district for thirty or forty miles around. The next morning I walked down to the 'Poste-kantoor' or post-office, a modest building surmounted by a flagstaff, and fronted with some white stucco-looking cement. I first tried the inquiry-window, then the door, then door and window, then window and door by way of variety, but no answer was obtainable. Observing an open wicket, and a door in the side-wall, I entered the first and opened the second to find an apartment, wherein stood a young fellow somewhat untidily dressed, who said:

'How do you do, Mr. Duval?'

On looking at his feet, not from the fear that he was his Satanic Majesty, but from a peculiar clinking sound proceeding therefrom as he moved, I noticed a decided attachment of one leg for the other, which appeared to

Digitized by Google

be cemented by a brace of steel-anklets and coupling-chain to match. I discovered that this was the 'Tronk,' or gaol, and this—*this* was *the* prisoner. In reply to his polite query, I said with more strength of language than modern etiquette would deem necessary, 'May I ask, who the devil are you, that you know my name?'

'Ah,' said he, 'I know ye rightly. Many's the time I've seen ye in Belfast.'

'You appear to be pretty comfortable here,' I said, wondering where the guardian of the place (if any) could be. 'Are you at liberty to come out?'

'Oh yes, sir; ov coorse I can.'

'What are you in for?' said I.

'Sure, I'm in for jumping a horse just,' replied he of the fetters.

This term 'jump' is South African for general methods of taking what does not belong to you. Questioning my Belfast horse-jumper further, he stated it was the result of a spree, that his time was three months; and he concluded by gently insinuating that half-a-crown or a couple of shillings would be a satisfactory method of supplying him with tobacco. I equally gently insinuated that perhaps the prison-rules would not permit either of its purchase or use; but he stated that he could go and buy it, or if I would give the money to the constable, who was nowhere about apparently, it would amount to the same thing. To prove his statement as to going to buy what luxuries he required, he wandered out and quietly marched down the principal street perfectly free and easy, his leg-chain trailing after him as he moved along. Such was prison discipline in Reddersburg. I met this horse-fancier afterwards with the constable, a gentleman who seemed to combine much Hottentot and other impure breeds

Digitized by Google

focussed in his ugly countenance, who, later on, presented me with a note in pencil from his prisoner, reiterating his request for tobacco, and *guaranteeing the honesty of the bearer*. A man can be almost forgiven for stealing a sheep in a country where flocks are to be counted by thousands, but being the owner of horses myself, I felt constrained to negative his request, adding that I did so because I thought it would be a pity to add luxuries to his already truly comfortable method of expiating a serious crime.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV.

BLOEMFONTEIN ONCE MORE—A FRACAS—BRANDFORD—WINBURG—JOKES—SENEKAL—A MODEL ASSEMBLY ROOM—CURIOUS KOPJE—BETHLEHEM—A QUEER DOCTOR—A MORNING CALL FROM THE ZULUS—A POLITICAL BLACKSMITH: HIS OPINIONS—HARRISMITH—A CURIOUS ROBBERY—DARK EXPERIENCES—IRISH NATIONALITY—THE TRONK—CANEM FIDELIS—CROSSING THE DRAKENSBERG—FIRST VIEW OF NATAL.

'BLOEMFONTEIN once again!' was our ejaculation, as after an easy run from Reddersburg we sighted the capital of the Orange Free State, where we rested a week, during which time the waggon was put into a smith's hands for repairs. It had undergone similar experiences at Grahamstown, Tarkastadt, Graaff Reinnet, and several other places, for the South African roads (?) mean destruction to springs, and in fact the strongest-built bullock-waggons succumb to the severity of the 'trekk.'

We just reached the hotel in time to 'assist' (as spectators) in an interesting fracas taking place, in which a dissipated-looking trader, from Basutoland, and an Anglicized Afrikander were the principals. The former, in the exercise of his own taste and judgment, had allied himself for better or worse to a Basuto lady, upon whose colour of skin the latter was casting some reflections, which ended in his carrying away with him a very unshapely organ of smell, and a by no means prepossessing ditto of vision—the chivalric spirit of the

Digitized by Google

proprietor of the fair (?) Basuto proving too much, when allied with a pair of strong knuckles, for the Afrikander, whom, doubtless a sadder and we may hope a wiser man, I last saw applying a large piece of raw beef to an eye evidently disposed to favour the early closing movement. Nothing important occurred during our second visit to Bloemfontein, which is unquestionably one of the most agreeable places in South Africa; and save the episode of a 'Coupeau' of real life, in the person of a local celebrity, who certainly would have proved a splendid 'example' advertisement to any Temperance League, our stay was not marked by any uncommon occurrence. Our object now was to cross the Free State and thence over the Drakensberg to reach Natal, and the first halting-place after leaving Bloemfontein was a very small village called Brandford; and after sleeping in an outhouse, hotel there being none, we rose at daylight and pushed forward to Winburg, a nice little place with a pretty court-room, where, on our arrival, we found the Chief Judge of the Free State, Reitz, dispensing justice to a somewhat phlegmatic lot of litigants. A gentleman here gave me a bundle of assegais said to have been taken at Moroisi's Mountain; and as he was suffering from chronic lameness, I thought the most suitable return I could make him was a pair of legs, which I did by forwarding the hind-quarters of a springbok, killed the day before. Being an Irishman, he laughed heartily at the joke, although it was at his own expense; and he returned the compliment by a dried ox tongue—a gentle hint, I presume, that I needed less of the talkative and more of the digestive organ of speech. He added a piece of beef 'biltong,' South African for dried strips of meat, which latter came in very useful on the road. He told me

Digitized by Google

that, to give his friends in Ireland a treat, he had brought with him from Africa, on a recent visit home, a large piece of very choice 'biltong,' and handed the same on arrival to his mother, with instructions to serve up at tea, which she did, smoking hot, having boiled the precious dried chip, to the intense horror of my friend, who forgot to give the necessary instructions as to how it should be prepared for the table, and whose long residence in South Africa had often led him to keep himself going with a strip of beef, and a jack knife to cut it, during many a long day's travel o'er the 'Veld.'

Next evening we reached Senekal, a very small place possessing a few stores, a church, and an 'Accommodation' House—the latter chiefly notable for its want of what it professed to supply. We arrived as evening fell, and after a great deal of trouble secured the accommodation of a stable for the horses from the proprietor of the 'Accommodation' House, who could not afford any 'accommodation' to the bipeds of the party. Always see that your horses are taken care of before you consider yourself when 'trekking' in South Africa; for if they knock up, your travelling miseries are increased fourfold. And bearing this maxim in mind, I saw the animals fed and housed, and then began to look around. Suddenly we stumbled on a gentleman whom I had met in Port Elizabeth, and who, doubtless as a punishment for some mortal sin sometime committed, was enduring a purgatorial existence as clerk in one of the melancholy-looking stores of Senekal. He and a friend made us welcome; they had one room, in which they lived, did their cooking, slept, received company —the latter fortunately, as it seemed, limited in number —and wherein, after a 'good square meal,' we made

Digitized by Google

evening festive to the accompaniments of a violin and harmonium, the former well played by a German who had left his country after the Franco-Prussian war, through all of which he had served, and was not anxious to repeat the experience.

The next morning we 'inspanned,' and taking a cursory glance of the place, concluded to go on (though advertised to appear), as we were of a unanimous opinion that a dozen people could not be brought together therein, no matter what the attractive metal provided might be.

'Well, we'll see the postmaster,' I said—'he has sent all the announcements—and consult him.'

'Here he is,' said the store-assistant, for the postmaster was a storekeeper in a large way; and a smart American style of little man he was.

'You're not going on?' he said.

'Yes; I think so,' I replied; 'unless you can guarantee that we shall have a certain number to form the nucleus of an audience.'

'Well, how many?' said he.

'Well, say fifty,' said I.

'Done!' said postmaster. 'You can have my wool-store for "the show," and the Kaffirs shall empty it partially out.'

Under these circumstances I consented to stay; and in an hour's time my assistants had made quite a model assembly-room of the galvanized iron shed which did duty as a receptacle for wool and hardware of all kinds. My curtains were strung up with ropes at one end over a platform constructed of piles of laths, four feet solid from the ground. A Cape-cart occupied a prominent position at the opposite end; while a couple of American ploughs made *recherché* reserved seats at the

Digitized by Google

right-hand side. Several iron barrows, with laths and deals stretched across them, formed ample ordinary seating arrangements, while the wool-bales, of which there were a large number which could not be ejected from the store, were most luxurious fauteuils. Nor were the decorations forgotten; for a lot of tinware, lanterns, buckets, etc., were clinging to the walls, while festoons of strings of 'biltong' stripes hung from the ceiling, and relieved the otherwise monotonous appearance of the iron roof.

It was quite a day of enjoyment in Senekal, as it happened. A funeral was to take place that afternoon, and the Boers came trooping in, wearing their best Sunday-black; the crape bands (*de rigueur*) around their wide-awake hats would have excited the envy of an undertaker's mutes.

Night came, and with it the audience, three parts of which were Boers, to whom the English language was unintelligible; and the other part mostly Germans, who understood it very indifferently. But no matter, it was all the same, they seemed to enjoy themselves to the fullest extent, and severely tested the postmaster's wool-shed, so numerous was the crowd seeking admission; and great was the satisfaction exhibited by him when he asked me was I satisfied with the result of his prophecy? I felt, however, that I was under no small obligation to the superior attractions of that funeral, which had brought so many of my auditors into Senekal, and thus evidently enabled them to combine duty first, business secondly, and amusement last.

On the road from Senekal to Bethlehem there is a remarkable kopje, or hill, which stands out a prominent figure in the landscape. It is surmounted with what to all appearance resembles a giant building of Doric archi-

Digitized by Google

tecture in course of erection, and the clefts therein and consequent shadows resemble a series of scaffoldings surrounding its walls. Some tremendous upheaval of nature must have here occurred to lift this enormous boulder from the innermost regions of the earth, wherein it probably slumbered for ages. Old Father Time has some wonderful methods of letting us know he was not born yesterday.

Bethlehem is celebrated for a battle fought between the Boers and Basutoes, in the war of ''66,' and a stone memorial in the market-place tells of the defeat of the latter by a vastly inferior numerical force. The chief business, amusement, or call it what you will, of the inhabitants, appeared to be the promotion of lotteries; and one queer medicine-man seemed to devote his energies to the successful filling up of subscription lists to raffle off Cape-carts, bobtailed ponies, musical boxes—anything or everything of a raffleable character, and for which the necessary quantity of the root of all evil could be procured, This medicine-man was a character, and not half a bad fellow—a soupçon of the 'rackety Jack,' combined with a good deal of innate ability. He came to say farewell as we started for Harrismith, and his peculiarities were a topic of conversation for the first half-hour of our morning 'trek.' At the second 'outspan,' while doing a little cooking in a dry spruit, a natural shelter against a somewhat high wind, we were interviewed by half a dozen stalwart Zulus. They were on their way to the Diamond Fields, and came up with a loud simultaneous shout of salutation, each man having his forefinger uplifted, and arm raised above his head. They showed their passes, and authority to carry assegais, and were well made up for their march, each having his blanket and belongings neatly strapped up

Digitized by Google

in a roll. Each wore an old military coat, of nondescript kind, the long grey overcoat of the British infantry being their chief fancy. Curiosity-led, I examined the buttons on one of their great-coats, a cast-off from the 94th regiment, and discovered a thorough impartiality of political sentiment exhibited therein. Taking the buttons in the front row downwards, we had the 'Army Service Corps;' the '41st Prince of Wales's Own;' the 'Devon Constabulary;' the 'République Français;' the 'Royal Artillery;' the 3rd 'Legion de Marche, Rhone;' the '42nd Old Black Watch;' and lastly, the harp and crown of the 'Royal Irish Constabulary:' all these varied forces represented on buttonholing the outer—well, chief—garment of the intelligent Zulu far away on the South African 'Veld.'

The Zulus expressed by strikingly appropriate pantomime that there was a vacuum in an important portion of their economy, and that nature abhorred the same, so I ordered a piece of stewed springbok flesh to be given to them, which was received with a spontaneous shout of 'Tanka;' emphasized as though it came from one throat. They threw their assegais for our amusement, executed a wild kind of war-dance, and sang; and when they had inflicted about five minutes of their musical monotony upon us, we deemed it prudent to 'inspan,' and put distance between ourselves and their melody, in the hope that it might supply the enchantment which I have never yet been able to extract from Kaffir musical efforts.

After running forty-four miles, we stopped at a roadside house, kept by a Dutch blacksmith, and several other things besides, amongst which politician appeared pre-eminent. He spoke English perfectly, and was quite *au fait* to most things in political circles. We

Digitized by Google

were not long in his society before it became a difficult matter to say whether his dislike of the English or his hatred of the native races was the strongest. He was civil enough to individuals, though evidently dogmatical in his opinions, and his diatribes at Imperial imbecility, as exemplified in the conduct of the Zulu War, were neither few nor lenient. There was quite too much truth in a great many of his home-thrusts, and also in his hypothesis that had the war been carried on by 3,000 or 4,000 mounted men, with a good, strongly-guarded base, near the border, Zululand could have been raided from Natal to Amatongo, from the sea to the Transvaal, and that which took a larger English army than fought at Waterloo nearly a year to accomplish, might have been carried out in as many weeks as it occupied months, and at a fractional part of the outlay. 'Bah!' said he; 'don't tell me. The Boers know how to fight the Kaffirs—on horseback, sir, with a good rifle to bring them down, and a good horse to get away on if you're hard pressed. Look at your troops, hampered up with all their baggage: pooh, they don't move without bringing the barracks with them. Why, one of your general officers had sixteen waggons for himself alone, and brought coops of cocks and hens with him. He ought to have been in your London parks, where he could feed the swans and ducks on the fancy ponds. I know the whole business inside out. £100 per month for waggons. Alle maaghte! Jumping Jerusalem! They can't put their finger in my eye. Help yourself, there's the Boer brandy and here's the water; or perhaps you'd rather have some Natal rum. I have it here, although I hate Natal and I hate the Natalians generally, and Maritzburghers worst of all!' Saying which, my political blacksmith rose and sought his bar,

Digitized by Google

returning with the Natal rum, the mention of which a moment before had evoked such a torrent of imprecacation. I sat up and talked 'Zulu War' with mine host until midnight, and retired to my waggon to sleep —a bed in the house not being available. And I slept and dreamt of Isandwlana, baggage-waggons, fortunate transport riders, general incompetence, Zulus, assegais, Boer blacksmiths, strong language, stronger opinions, mental confusion, ideas blank, and chaos 'come again!'

On the morning's 'trek,' while 'outspanned' for breakfast on the 'Veld,' a wandering Kaffir herd, followed by half a dozen dogs, put in an appearance; and just to try him, I offered him five shillings for one of the mysteriously-bred curs yelping at his heels; but no, he wouldn't part with any of them, although I doubled the sum and showed him the amount in silver coins. He was obdurate, and I began to think that romance about the Arab and his steed had some basis of possibility, when we really met with a hungry-looking, nearly naked Zulu, who refused half a sovereign for a brute that would be dear as a gift, so we gave him the remains of the springbok, now becoming decidedly high in odour, and green in colour; and, as we drove away, we saw him and his two piccaninies, who had come from the ground apparently, and his six dogs, all enjoying themselves with appetite and digestion, ignoring these little peculiarities that might perhaps be objected to by persons of more delicately constituted tastes. When we reached the hotel at Harrismith, we found the topic of conversation a robbery of £5,000, which had taken place there a few days previously. It appeared that a cattle-dealer, carrying bullion to the amount of £5,000, had lost the portmanteau which he conveyed

Digitized by Google

the money in, and said it was taken out of his bedroom. Mine host was indignant, and repudiated the insinuation. Most people were of the opinion that, if he carried £5,000 in gold about with him, he deserved to be robbed; some (few it is to be hoped) probably regretted that his peculiarity for hawking gold mines about him was not known to them sooner; and others (equally few, let us pray) envied the happy thief who had grabbed that leathern valise and annexed its contents for the benefit of himself, his heirs, administrators, etc. etc.

The second evening's performance at Harrismith was completely frustrated by a winter thunderstorm. The lightning displays at home are particularly small beer to the heavenly pyrotechny that goes on and goes off in Africa's skies. After ten minutes' downpour of rain upon the corrugated iron roof of the hotel, a lull in the thunderous noise its fall created proclaimed a pause while the fuse was being put to some more of the sky-rockets; so I wandered out into the yard to take observations of the evening's probable weather, and had hardly stepped outside the door when I plunged into eighteen inches of water, which the previous short practice of the celestial watering-cart sufficed to accumulate. Some time afterwards I went to look for the Town Hall and succeeded in reaching it; but it is sometimes much easier to go than to return, as I discovered on essaying to find my way back to Caskie's Castle, as we named the hotel. After twenty minutes of futile endeavour, a friendly light appeared through the darkness, and I unearthed from a tin hut one of the blackest Kaffirs I had ever seen—at least he seemed so on this occasion. In a mixture of bad Dutch, worse Zulu, and very improper English, I explained to him that the finding of Caskie's Hotel was my dearest object in life.

Digitized by Google

He came along to show me the way, and the incidents immediately following constitute the darkest experience of my life. My guide I said was black—yes, black as Erebus, or charcoal, or Wallsend, or any other simile of a sufficiently sombre kind to denote his intensity ; the night was blacker still—the second edition of the storm about to issue from the press; the ground was black from the rain; my shins were rapidly blackening from the number of sluits, stones, and other impedimenta, into and over which I stumbled along, vainly trying to keep a sight of the black woolly head and blacker sheepskin which surmounted and surrounded the form of my eclipsed guiding-star. But we reached home at last, and I loyally secured a pot of liquor from a mysterious barmaid who would readily have passed for one of the opposite sex, and poured it down the red gullet of my Zulu guide.

Virtue is said to be its own reward, but with the intelligent Kaffir on whom the blessings of civilization have dawned, it is as well to add a munificent donation of sixpence or thereabouts—it helps virtue considerably, and awakens quite an appreciation of your noble character.

Curious climate. Next day no trace in Harrismith of the last night's storm and rain, except the roof of the stables which had been lifted off and deposited in a piled-up ruin in the adjoining yard—the corrugated iron twisted into strips, and the wood-work reduced to firewood. Not even the smallest pool of water to denote the fierce downpour of the night before, nor the slightest speck observable in the splendid bright blue sky, a remnant of the banks of cloud from which the lightning gleamed so recently.

I met here, in the person of an elderly gentleman

Digitized by Google

carrying on the business of an 'Afslager' (auctioneer), a cousin by descent of the most celebrated, as he was decidedly the most interesting, of Irish patriots, Robert Emmett; the story of whose patriotism, his last memorable speech, and his romantic love, will be remembered as long as Irish tongues remain to tell, and Irish ears to listen to, the story of his fate. His namesake and kinsman, with whom I had several conversations, I found deeply imbued with Irish sentiments. Ireland he had never seen, and had no knowledge of, save through the channel of reading and historical study; and yet here was this African born-and-bred man sporting an emerald-green tie, and exhibiting an apparently real interest in all the national enterprises and sentiments of the country and people for whom his ancestor had lived and died. Who shall say after this that the age of sentiment has departed along with that of chivalry? I make my bow to you, Mr. Emmett, and from what I saw of you, your stock has not degenerated by transplantation from the humid climate of Innisfail, to the arid atmosphere of 'de Orange Vrie Staadt.'

I visited the 'Tronk'—that is, the 'Tronk' visited me—for the windows of the Court-room where 'the Show' was on view faced into the courtyard of the prison, and I saw part of a flogging administered to a Kaffir. It is not a pretty sight, that flogging of men; and without possessing the smallest bias Exeter-Hall-wards, I think the administering of the 'cat' to an ignorant Kaffir is worse than to a white man. But this is to be said *per contra*—in South African prisons the confinement, and such labour as goes with it, seems to be comparatively no punishment to the natives, some of whom, as instanced in Kimberly Gaol, would rather remain there than accept their freedom.

Digitized by Google

One of the most touching incidents I ever beheld occurred in the hotel yard, during my stay in Harrismith. It was the death from poisoning of a spaniel belonging to a French builder, and might be said to be the loss of his sole companion. The poor brute, in all its agonies and death-throes, still endeavoured to lick its master's hand; and answering to his gentle calling of his name, 'Mimi,' turned such loving and piteous looks upon him, that the tears stood in the man's eyes as he caressed and tried to soothe the dying pangs of his favourite beast. The person who placed that poison would have had an ill-time of it if the knot of sympathetic Scotch masons, the Frenchman's fellow-workmen, standing round had possessed a divining-rod to point out the evilly-disposed one. There is something so approaching humanity about a dog, that on every hand sympathy was exhibited for the poor Frenchman as he gently carried away the dead beast in his arms and laid it on his own bed.

The next day we ascended the slopes of the Drakensberg—a scarcely noticeable ascent from the Free State side—and about mid-day we evidently attained the highest altitudes, and peered down the steep slopes of the other side. A change was quite perceptible in the features of the landscape: red sand patches, dotted here and there over the green, which was deep in colour and richer in appearance from a young thick grass shooting up everywhere. The descent looked six or eight miles to the first valley below, which seemed freely watered by numerous streams. The kloofs were full of foliage—a more intense look of verdure exhibited throughout all the vegetation. The hills and mountains were handsome and picturesque, and it required no guide-book to tell us we were looking down at the land of fair Natal.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAND OF FAIR NATAL—A GLIMPSE OF ITS HISTORY—FROM THE DRAKENSBERG TO THE SEA—PORT NATAL—DURBAN.

CLOSE on four centuries ago, when the sun rose on the 1497th anniversary of the birth of Christ, Vasco de Gama, after his great feat of seamanship, the rounding of the Cape, dropped the anchor of his galleon in those waters of the Indian Ocean whose rollers wash the shores of Port Natal. The pious mariner, bearing in mind the religious teachings of his youth, immediately named the land he now saw for the first time, Natal, commemorating thus the day of its discovery as being the anniversary of the Nativity. The worthy Portugee, whose seafaring enterprise thus led him to these shores, and whose religious training suggested a name indicative of 'goodwill' and 'peace,' could see little of the future bloodshed and massacre with which the history of this interesting colony is surrounded. As Natal appears to be an unfamiliar place to most home readers a brief historical *résumé* of its more stirring events may not be uninteresting. We will leave its first and more uneventful period of existence, and come to the early time of the present century, when scarcely a dozen years of its course were run, when up rose Chaka, the Zulu chief, and, assegai in hand, aggression in heart, and ambition in desire, warred, burnt, and pillaged everywhere in his

Digitized by Google

vicinity, and, unsated with the bloodshed in his own immediate surroundings, rushed with his followers into Natal, and wreaked death and desolation upon the unoffending natives who there held undisputed sway. Chaka penetrated the whole territory south of the Tugela, nor was his career of desolation even checked by the Umzimkulu River at the southern boundary of Natal. A short cycle of time, some fourteen years, and Chaka succumbed to the fratricidal stroke of his brother Dingaan, who, grasping his power, became the dominant chief and leader.

A small colony was shortly after formed at Port Natal by Lieutenant Farewell, an English officer, who founded the town of Durban. And now the British trader, who never misses his opportunity under any circumstances and in any place, appears upon the scene, and, whether to peddle knives or dispense whisky, starts his shop in the midst of the Zulu lords and masters of the soil. These Britishers adapted themselves to the manners and customs they met with, and set up as chiefs under the sceptre and obedient to the rule of the ebony Cain, the usurper of his brother's power, Dingaan. No doubt all went on satisfactorily. The English trader profited by the inexperience of the native, and 'went for' and made his little pile; in fact, heaped up his hay into immeasurable stacks, whilst the god of day shone as he alone can shine in tropical climes. Meantime the Dutch Boers, or farmers of Cape Colony, who were dissatisfied with the glorious freedom of British rule, made up their minds to seek 'fresh fields and pastures new,' where the continued fluttering of the Union Jack was less likely to meet the eye, and immunity from the tri-coloured ophthalmia it produced a probability—and so they came to Natal.

Digitized by Google

Through the parched plains of what is now the Orange Free State, over the snow-clad mountains of the Drakensberg, down slopes of hills 12,000 feet above sea-level, came these dauntless 'Voortrekkers' with their waggons, their cattle, their 'vrouws,' their 'kinderen,' and their household belongings.

I have crossed the Drakensberg, and made its descent, a by no means easy one, on a well-constructed and fairly kept road, and I could not but express surprise at the courage and perseverance of the 'Trekboers' of half a century ago, who first explored its majestic heights, and descended the rugged mountain-sides, devoid of track or path, into the valleys of the unknown land beneath, literally carrying along with them their hearths and homes.

On they came, and once more feeling free of any dominant influence, spread their farms over the north-western part of the land, which, thanks to Chaka and his braves, had been depopulated of its previous swarms of native inhabitants.

In 1838—a year remembered with sorrow by many a Dutch pioneer's family—the leader of the Boers, Pieter Relief by name, with some seventy followers, sought an interview with Dingaan to effect the purchase of the land they occupied. They did so, and received from him the necessary grants. And now comes a story of savage treachery which it is revolting to believe is a characteristic of the African native races. Dingaan invited the Boers to exchange civilities prior to their departure; and leaving their guns outside, as the Zulu custom required, they entered the King's kraal, and while sitting there defenceless and unarmed, were set upon at a given signal by 10,000 warriors and slaughtered to a man. Like the tiger, fired by the taste of blood, the

Digitized by Google

Zulus started for Natal to slay the rest of the immigrants, and at the spot where now stands the village of Weenen (or 'Weeping'—significant name enough) they immolated to their war-god some six hundred Dutch people—men, women, and children sharing alike the same fate. It now became a question of life and death with the remainder of the 'Trekboers;' and four hundred strong, under the command of Pieter Uys, whose lineal descendant died a hero's death at Hlobane trying to save his son in the late Zulu War, they offered fight to the red-handed followers of Dingaan. They were surrounded, many cut their way out, but Pieter Uys and his son were killed fighting hard against the Zulu—a fate emulated by his descendant and his boy not many months ago, showing how history has fatally repeated itself in the family of Uys. The English traders and settlers now joined the contest, and raising native armies, essayed to break Dingaan's power. Their efforts, however, utterly failed, and they were chased to Port Natal, and sought refuge on board the ships in the harbour.

At this period it looked as if it was all over as regards white domination and black toleration in Natal; but the inflexible Dutchmen, when once on a set purpose, seemed determined to follow out their ends to the farthest limitation. So over the Drakensberg again they came, led by one Pretorius—a name often to be met with in Dutch districts—and seven hundred strong, beat Dingaan and his Zulus and put them to rout. The Zulu chieftain, however, shortly raised another army; but meantime further Cain-like propensities were developing themselves, and Nemesis, in the shape of his brother M'Pande, with a large following, went over to the other side. A terrible

Digitized by Google

battle ensued; each fought to the death; hundreds fell; and the power of Dingaan was broken, and his own flight from the field ended by his assassination. Panda was the next king, but what little fame he may have possessed has been entirely effaced by that of his successor, whose name, 'Ketchwayo,' should kindle a burning spot of shame on the cheek of every Englishman when he thinks in the present, or reads in the future, the story of mismanagement and the network of red tape disclosed and unravelled by the annals of the Zulu war.

A Republic was now formed by the Dutch, and the population was greatly increased by the additions of Cape Colony Boers, who, discontented under British rule, sought the more congenial sway of their brethren in Natal. All went on smoothly until some Pondos, a tribe on the southern border, unable to distinguish the difference between *meum* and *tuum*, converted a number of cattle belonging to the Boers into a movable feast. The latter, thinking that a comfortable fire would be likewise acceptable wherewith to cook the purloined steaks, burned all the kraals of the suspected Pondos, whose chief immediately sought British protection. As the sacred name of Britain is inimical to injustice of any kind, and as 'the flag that braved,' etc., unfurls itself naturally to preserve the weak against the strong, and as Natal appeared an attractive place, and would probably prove a successful colony, the necessary protection was afforded, military occupation followed, hostilities resulted; the English were at first defeated, but being reinforced, the Boers thought discretion the wiser part, quashed their Republic, and, through their Volksraad, or Parliament, acknowledged British supremacy. Such are the principal points of Natal history up to 1842.

Digitized by Google

A long interlude of peace was rudely broken by the recent war in Zululand; but the colony of Natal may be congratulated upon bearing peaceful comparison, much to its own advantage, with its sister colonies of South Africa, during most of its history under British rule.

Natal has been called; and not inaptly, 'The Garden of South Africa;' and entering it from the Orange Free State over the celebrated Drakensberg chain of mountains, the change is most marked, and the differential aspect complete. So soon as the heights are crowned and the descent has commenced, you are made aware that climate, vegetation, and the land your wheels are bowling over is altered. The country we leave behind us is an immense elevated plateau, covered with large rolling plains, growing long meadow grasses, and intersected with low hogback chains of uninteresting mountains, upon whose tops and sides magnificent crops of loose shingle and boulder-stones flourish with evident impunity. Down the slopes of the Drakensberg, however, clumps of bush, trees—genuinely novel sights just now—and a thick, rich-coloured green grass are observable; and these objects increase in number as you approach the coast, where vegetation becomes semi-tropical and luxuriant.

The first town I visited in Natal was Ladysmith, one of the depôts during the Zulu War. The laager in the centre of the town still stands, its loopholed walls and sentry-boxes giving evidence of the scare that must have been felt when the news of Isandlwana reached their ears. It is an open town, small, pretty; and the Zulu police in white calico jackets and drawers, carrying a pair of assegais and knob-kerries, add quite a picturesque effect to its appearance. The road from there to Maritz-

Digitized by Google

burg passes Colenso, at which place I swam the Tugela (a river whose name was on all men's tongues not long ago), and which here forms a considerable stream; thence to Weston, Estcourt and Howick, crossing respectively the Mooi, Bushman, and Umgeni rivers. Howick boasts the highest cascade in South Africa—the Umgeni Falls—which precipitate themselves in a slender silver thread over a wall of cliff 360 feet from summit

The Umgeni Falls.

to basement. The Falls, when I visited them, were suffering from drought, but were sufficiently striking to evoke appreciation of their unquestionable beauty. There is no break in the falling water; over the cliff it comes, and descends in one clear stream into the seething pool beneath, without a crag, or rock, or boulder-stone to break or mar its glassy wave, sparkling in the sun with all the varied colours of the bow of Iris. Pietermaritzburg, or, as it is more generally called, Maritzburg, is fourteen miles from the Umgeni Falls.

Digitized by Google

Hence they are a source of much attraction to honeymoon couples, and candidates for the much bliss and little woe accruing as a consequent to the tying of nuptial knots. Having wondered if the Rechabites or Good Templars ever came out to feast their eyes and fill their corporeal frames with the waters of the Umgeni, in dancing spray descending, I 'trekked,' to borrow a Dutch expression, for the capital of Natal, the home of Colenso, the Zulu converted and converting bishop. Six miles from Maritzburg is the summit of the Town Hill. You have then a descent of a somewhat abrupt character, the gradient in some parts showing one in fifteen—decidedly a heavy bit of collar-work for a waggon and horses leaving town. Maritzburg, from wherever you approach it, presents the prettiest aspect and background of scenery of any town in South Africa. The varied colouring of the surrounding hills which rise on all sides, leaving it embedded in the basin below; the red-tiled and white roofs of the houses scattered through an infinity of foliage, tree-planting having been duly and sedulously carried on here, together with the rich colouring of the entire picture, produce so interesting an effect that I have no hesitation in awarding the prize of beauty to this Helen of South African towns. But I shall have more to say about it in its civic aspect, and will therefore content myself with offering this tribute to a suburban view of its attractions.

The distance between Maritzburg and Durban is about sixty miles, over hilly and mountainous roads, as, indeed, are all the highways and byways of Natal; it would be very hard to find a level plain within its limits. The country on every side is most interesting. The railway, now open to within a few miles of the capital, and shortly to be extended thereto, traverses

Digitized by Google

over some serious altitudes which severe and ingenious engineering skill has alone enabled it to surmount, steep cuttings, curves that would paralyze a timid traveller, and tunnels which appear to enter this side of the earth for the purpose of coming out at the other. I travelled by the main road, which, however, keeps on the friendliest terms with the railway all the way, and indeed crosses the track several times from leaving the capital to arrival at the port.

Approaching the sea, vegetation becomes denser; sugar plantations, an important factor in Natal agricultural industries; coolie farms, cacti, bananas, waving fields of sugar-cane, graceful bamboos, nodding palms, and towering blue gum trees; the Bluff and lighthouse far off to the right; in the distance beyond, stretched far as the eye can scan, the Indian Ocean, whose rude swelling rollers have proved so implacable an enemy to the well-being of South Africa's eastern seaboard; the glistening roofs of houses clustering together in the foreground—such is the picture spread before us as, cresting the last hill, we bring Durban into view.

We are constantly reminded by poet, prelate, politician, and philosopher, that it is an extremely unwise action to 'build upon the sand;' but despite the warnings so often repeated, and the consequences so dangerous to such a proceeding reiterated again and again, Durban seemed tolerably comfortable, though its most earnest admirer must admit that sand, and sand alone, forms its principal foundation. The low-lying flat of sand whereon stands the town sweeps away from the sea to the foot of a long bush-covered hill some two or three miles from the shore, which elevation is studded with the residences, here and there peeping out of the foliage, of the Durban 'swells,' and is known

Digitized by Google

as 'The Berea.' An arm of the sea, entering by a narrow mouth, runs in to the left of the town, and were it not for that general curse of South African seaports, a dangerous bar of shifting sand, and a further want of depth of water when the former *is* safely crossed, would prove a fine natural harbour, land-locked on every side. But the bar—the harbour bar! —too often it emulates the words of Kingsley, and 'lies moaning,' awakening a responsive echo in the breast of the Durban merchant, whose customers 'up country' are waiting for the goods he is unable to land; and we may safely assume that the bar referred to is an emphatic one to facility of commerce and general trade. The ships of the port, as a rule, lie out in the open sea, off the 'Back Beach' (a strand embellished with wrecks), and toss about in the heavy rollers.

When the breeze is fresh and sea strong, I have seen the yard-arms dipping into the waves on either side as the vessels rock to and fro, chained at their anchorage. It is a luxury, coming ashore, that once experienced in bad weather will be appreciated ever afterwards. Passengers are brought to land in a small steam-launch, which bobs about at the ship's side while the process of transhipment is going on, suggesting acrobatic exertions to secure that desideratum. There is an ingenious wicker-cage, slung from a kind of crane, by means of which the descent is made by ladies and nervous individuals from the deck above to the tug below. Heavy goods are brought ashore in lighters, and a serious amount of labour is necessitated in bringing cargo to land. Unfavourable weather, I need not add, retards such progress, sometimes to the extent of total deadlock.

Durban has the look of business about it, if quantities

Digitized by Google

of goods being moved about, mule and ox waggons loading up, and general briskness may be taken as an indication. It is said, however, that much of this briskness is the result of a large forwarding trade 'up country.' When I visited Durban at the close of the Zulu War the general expression was that commercial dulness was supreme. This I supposed to be one of the natural consequences of a reaction from the activity promoted by the late Zulu War, and yet it was insisted that neither the colony nor the people benefited by the Imperial millions disseminated during that campaign, and there was a great outcry against being expected to contribute even a minimised amount of the expenses it incurred. The Natalians also affirmed that it was no war of their making; that it was an Imperial move on the black and white chessboard of South African policy, and that if they had been self-governed probably no war would have occurred. This disclaimer read very ingeniously; but when we found them in the same breath, through the utterances of one of their most eminent public men, accompanied by a deputation of leading citizens, presenting a farewell address to Sir Bartle Frere, and in no measured terms embodying their gratitude and endorsing his policy and actions, it became somewhat of an incongruity, and the unprejudiced observer naturally drew the inference that the Natal politicians were a little mixed in their principles, and did not object to Zulu or any other war so long as 'the old house at home' supplied the well-filled stocking 'to pay,' not 'the piper,' but the commissariat contractor, the transport rider, the publicans and sinners to whom the Zulu business proved an unlooked-for 'El Dorado,' and who are probably sighing for those happy times of easy money-getting to return again. It is said that Kaffirs

Digitized by Google

have been seen with £500 and £1,000 cheques received from the Government for services rendered for transport during the war; and the remarks of my Drakensberg political blacksmith are borne out by the statement that fourteen ox-waggons were engaged to carry the private necessaries (save the mark!) of a General commanding a certain column repeatedly inquired for and conspicuous by its absence until the work was done.

Ponder on this, O ye ratepayers of Great Britain, and think how beautiful a thing is glory, cheap as regards danger, but decidedly expensive to you as the payer of the bill of costs. Old colonists who have fought and bled many a time in native wars smile grimly when they read the mystic letters spliced to the names of Zulu-war campaigners, and agree with the French story that to be decorated the most is not to be so at all. I once met an officer who, having been deprived of his Government billet at the close of the war, was turning his attention to livery-stable keeping as a lucrative means of livelihood, and who on receiving a C.M.G. as a salve for the loss of his appointment, made the remark that he thought it a very suitable addendum to the signboard over his stables—'O Michael! O George!'

Durban is openly built; good stores and warehouses prevail. A neat park and handsome garden adjoin the post and Government offices, a respectable and useful pile of buildings. One long street intersects the town, terminating at the Point or landing-place, about a mile from the Market Square, and running up to the Berea at the opposite side into the Pinetown and Maritzburg main road.

There is a curious population, somewhat mixed in colour and garb, as the Indian Coolie, as well as the native Zulu, is an institution in Natal; added to which

Digitized by Google

there is a sprinkling of Malays, and last, and generally least, we have the 'childlike' expressive face of the irrepressible 'Heathen Chinee.' The Coolies, men and women, certainly add picturesqueness to the scene. Their garments of exceeding lightness (except when an infantry soldier's cast-off coat is made to do duty), are brilliant in colouring and graceful in arrangement; the ornaments of the women—bangles, anklets, bracelets, ear and nose rings. Their sententious looks and fierce expression mark a marvellous contrast to the 'devil-may-care' Zulu 'boy' (all are 'boys,' a colonial term invariably used), with his open countenance and merry grin—a grin which the slightest suggestion of humour provokes into a laugh of a thoroughly equine character. Here he comes swaggering along. A meal-sack, with two holes to let his arms out, possibly forms his costume, and perhaps an old wide-awake hat, round which is twisted a meer cat's skin, or a couple of tufts of ostrich feathers, surmounts his woolly head. I never could rid myself of a feeling of repulsion and distrust when looking at or speaking to one of the Indian Coolies, which a Zulu boy was quite incapable of producing. They are fine fellows, these South African natives, and you feel the same kind of sympathy that a large Newfoundland or St. Bernard dog excites when looking at them, you want to pat them on the head and say, 'Poor fellow—good boy,' etc. Natal people tell you, however, that the Coolie importation—and it has been an importation—is the result of necessity from want of supply in the labour market. These Coolies are under an engagement of ten years, half of which time they must work at the sugar plantations, and the balance is at their own disposal. It is estimated that there are upwards of 15,000 of them in Natal, and large numbers have secured farms

Digitized by Google

out of their savings and settled thereon, and they display an infinite amount of diligence, perseverance, and industry in the cultivation of their plots.

This introduction of Indian labour is much to be regretted, as the Asiatic is of a repellent and uncongenial character, and it says little for the power of British influence upon the native mind, when with a population of over 350,000 Zulus in Natal alone, it is found necessary to send across to Bombay for Coolies to supply the working power of the colony. The difficulty is in a great measure due to the Zulu marriage customs and their ideas of wifely conduct and duty. When a man has enough cattle to buy a wife he does so, and if the funds, or rather the cattle permit, he adds another at no distant date. As times prosper, numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6 are added to the nuptial list; and mark you, instead of working his brains to a pulp and his hands to a blister to provide schooling and French for the girls, Dotheboys Hall for the lads, trips to Margate for Materfamilias, and villa residences for the family, as his white would-be lord and master does, the married Zulu quietly sits on his hunkers or reclines upon his mat, and watches Mrs. Zulu 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, as the case may be, tilling the ground, tending the cattle, reaping the grain, or making herself otherwise generally useful, the rule of their married life being that the whole work devolves upon what we are pleased to call the 'weaker sex.' If you saw the stalwart frames and sinewy strength of some of the Kaffir ladies you would question the propriety of a similar application of the foregoing expression. Hence the difficulty. Mr. Zulu has a good time and enjoys it. He has no occasion to work, and he very naturally says, why should he worry himself to slave for the white man, when he has earned sufficient to

Digitized by Google

enable him to buy wives and cattle and have a good time generally?

This proves, therefore, one of the prominent difficulties to contend with as regards Zulu labour for a lengthened period of time, although instances of long servitude occur sometimes, it is quite the exception. In the hotel at Durban where I lived, the landlord, 'old Dal,' pointed out two Zulu grooms—bright, smart, pleasant, intelligent fellows—who had been with him seven years, with occasional short intervals, when homesickness dictated a visit to their native kraals. These cases went to prove that the employer was what they considered a good 'Baas;' and I must say the natives are treated with much more consideration and are less despised in Natal than in any other part of Southern Africa. This is possibly explainable from the facts that the white population are almost exclusively English, and the native races are of a purer breed and higher intelligence than elsewhere.

I have always thought a Dublin fishfag or a Billingsgate vendor of the finny tribe stood pre-eminent in the arts of declamation and aspersion, but the performances of a Coolie woman of similar professional tendencies in Durban, proved my pre-conceived opinions fallacious. There she stood, in the centre of the market-square, a little slender copper-coloured fury, the lightning flashing out of her fierce black eyes, waving her arms, stamping her bare feet upon the ground until the bangles on the one and the anklets upon the other rang in metallic chorus, breathing defiance to a heterogeneous crowd of Coolies, Chinamen, and Kaffirs. A Zulu policeman, with the gentle persuasion of a huge knobkerrie, was endeavouring to persuade her that retirement to one of her Imperial Majesty's boudoirs, stone-fronted, with

Digitized by Google

bars to keep the thieves out, might be conducive to the calming down of the temporary excitement under which she was labouring. She failed to agree with him, but the knobkerrie is a very insinuating species of persuasion, and an argument that the head will sometimes feel while the heart remains as adamant. Result: Exit Coolie woman and new pair of steel bangles, accompanied by police and stretcher.

While I was in Durban the jubilee of the printers, publicans, and bill-posters took place—in other words, there was a contested election for a seat in the Legislative Council. Now the Legislative Council of Natal was, and probably is still, a highly influential body, consisting of some fifteen members elected by the people, and five executive ditto appointed by Government, the whole under the supreme direction of a Governor-General, whose duty it is to advise the Home Government in London as to what to do or say to the proposals made, and measures suggested by this assembly of legislators, forwarded to Downing Street with an accompanying despatch. The advice of the Governor means, I take it, yea, or nay; and trouble as the council will, and worry over questions as they may, their acceptance or otherwise appears to depend on how 'Lord Burleigh'—I mean the Governor-General—'nods his head.'

Nevertheless, a contest which recalled most forcibly the good old days of open voting at home, raged furiously, and a considerable amount of personality was duly introduced into the arguments *pro* and *con*. The *casus belli*, the rock upon which the one side planted its standard, and the other collided, was the principle of 'self-government;' and certainly the present system of returning men to vote on questions and propose

Digitized by Google

measures in a council whose action may be vetoed by a Governor's despatch, does read somewhat like playing at Parliament. This then was the popular cry, but individual popularity appeared to have firmer hold than self-government, and Durban returned two members holding opposite views, and each pledged to his constituents not to touch his colleague with the other extremity of a telegraph pole.

The election reminded me of those happy, happy days of purity and truth, when it was worth a man's while to be an elector, and when he could always count on at least a ten-pound note, to say nothing of refreshments, for the honour of his 'plumper' as the close of the poll approached. I am bound to admit that at least two of the candidates were not only able men, but excellent speakers, well calculated to do good work in any legislative body to which they might be returned, and whose opinions, though diverse on many points, will probably, as extremes are said to meet, be pulling 'bow' and 'stroke' oar in the Government boat when Natal attains her ambition, and has a representative body to make her laws. To bear out my previous assertion in respect to the Governor's advising powers, a blue-book, containing a despatch of Sir Garnet Wolseley, while High Commissioner of Natal, to the Secretary of State at home, arrived by the English mail. It contained a despatch advising most strongly the negation of a proposed bill for the cession of self-government to the colony. This despatch awakened the lion in his lair, and rivers of ink steeped in gall, and emanating from editorial pens whose every word was pointed and barbed, commented upon the 'one General's' perfidy in the columns of the Natal journals whose watchword was colonial Home Rule.

Digitized by Google

Durban may be summed up thus: Temperature—October, pleasant. Fruits — bananas, pine-apples, loquats, oranges, etc., cheap and plentiful. Newspapers, daily, threepence and one penny respectively. Natives —big, good-humoured, lightly clad. Coolies—quiet, frugal, treacherous, lighter clad. Hotels—good, bad, indifferent. Public-houses—numerous, well-frequented, gin-dispensing. Mosquitoes — myriads, bloodthirsty, sleep-destroying. Harbour—difficult to enter, worse to leave. Streets—dusty when dry, impassable when wet. Suburbs—pretty, bush luxuriant, charming scenery, pleasant, rich, warm, and cheerful. Men — good fellows, bad fellows, loafers, and hangers-on. Women —darlings, as they are 'all the world around,' and, having got to the fair sex, my pen in gallant plight refuses to indite more, as it knows that to go further might be to fare worse.

After a fortnight's sojourn I said good-bye to Durban, feeling much admiration for the business qualities and British energy that has reared on a sand-flat so eminently respectable a home of commerce, and struggled against the natural obstacle presented by its unhappy harbour bar with so much courage and success.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAND OF FAIR NATAL—VERULAM—KAFFIR TRADING—THE COAST —THUNDERSTORMS—MARITZBURG.

We went per train from Durban, through the sugar country down to Verulam, in company with a motley congregation of Coolies, Kaffirs, and white people. Neat carriages and smart officials are the order of arrangements by the Natal railway management, and we quietly proceeded over a narrow-gauge railroad, steaming and puffing coastwise. Soon we sighted the Umgeni River, and its mouth—or I should say mouths, for lengthy strips of sand render its estuary a miniature Hooghly, and produce a plurality of streams as it empties itself into the sea; this more particularly is the case when the river is low, as it was when I had the privilege of steaming over its viaduct. The country is picturesque, hilly, even mountainous, with denser vegetation waving fields of sugar-cane and Coolie gardens adding variety to an already varied landscape. The principal sugar-mill is close on the line of rail, a few miles from Verulam, and numerous trucks were disgorging forests of cut canes, the Zulus and Coolies vieing with each other in the work of unloading. The Coolie, from his Asiatic face and the varied hues of his apparel, constitutes a more picturesque figure than his deeper-coloured African brother, though the latter exhibits a manlier and more vigorous frame that would probably

Digitized by Google

recommend itself to the eye of the sculptor who is attracted by shape, as the former would to the artist whose *forte* is colour. Sugar-cane planting is an industry evidently appreciated by the landholders on the coast-side of Natal, and as far as I could learn was considered a fairly remunerative one, though not a speculation where the profits were large in proportion to the capital invested. The smoke of the mill-chimneys curling up here and there out of the bush-covered country was indicative of there being at least a section of Natalians who considered it worthy of attention.

Verulam, a truly pretty place, considerably scattered, and in summer doubtless warm, has an evidently large business with natives; and when it is estimated that over 2,000,000 acres in Natal is allotted to native locations, it is not surprising that the storekeepers keep an attractive stock calculated to rivet the attention and induce the shattering of the last commandment in the heart of our dusky brother. As a consequence, wrist straps, highly-coloured handkerchiefs, blankets—whose patterns must have been invented by a lineal descendant of the original builder of Joseph's coat—strings of beads, belts, bags, bangles, second-hand uniforms from that of the gay hussar to the more plebeian foot-soldier, jostle each other in captivating confusion in the windows and on the shelves of the stores devoted to what is called the 'Kaffir trade.'

But Verulam is not more taken up with this branch of legitimate trading than many other places of a more pretentious character in 'the land of fair Natal.' Close to the town is its second edition in black type, in the shape of a large Kaffir village, where a zealous missionary engages in the Sisyphus-like task of rolling the precepts of Christianity into the native understand-

Digitized by Google

ing. Verulam, I may mention, is considered a 'serious' town, and is a reputed stronghold of the admirers of John Wesley. Far away on every side are mountains well bushed, farms, and plantations laid out, and a general look of warmth and comfort, heightened as the picture is by a golden glow as the sun sinks quickly to his rest. There is a peculiarity in the sudden transit from day to night which obtains in tropical and semi-tropical climes—the entire absence of that long evening light which exists in Britain, and this rule applies to Southern Africa, where the moment the sun's disc sinks below the horizon the night falls at once, and enwraps his darkest mantle on all around.

No better description of the setting sun in tropic regions has ever been written than that embodied in the following lines:

> 'No pale gradations quench his ray,
> No twilight-dews his wrath allay;
> With disc like battle-target red
> He rushes to his burning bed,
> Dyes the wild waves with bloody light,
> Then sinks at once, and all is night.'

But night, on the occasion of my return from Verulam, was illuminated by a largely-extended grass-fire which blazed up the mountain-side from base to summit, lapping the long dried grass of the past season in a most vivid sheet of flame, and rather unpleasantly awakening the cobras, puff-adders, ringhals, and other members of the serpent species who were comatosely enjoying oblivion until the warmth of the summer sun should awaken them from their slumber. These grass-fires are the result of design, for the purpose of clearing off the old grass, and giving the newer shoots their opportunity.

Back *viâ* Pinetown to Maritzburg through forty miles

Digitized by Google

of mountain scenery, back to the capital which I found full of as much of 'the pomp and circumstance of glorious war' as could be realized by the enrolment of a troop of irregular horsemen for service in Basutoland. The corps to which I refer consisted of 'Baker's horse,' a volunteer force enrolled by Colonel Baker, who explicitly stated in his advertisement for members, that 'no loafers or swashbucklers need apply'—a gentle hint to an evidently growing section of the communities of Durban and Natal, whom the termination of the Zulu War left without work to do, and who were classified there under the general title of 'dead-beats.' The rate of remuneration for turning themselves into targets, held out to the volunteers, was five shillings per diem, and one shilling extra when the trooper brought his own horse. The invitation to arms concluded thus: 'None but gentlemen who can ride and shoot, and whose character will bear the very strictest investigation, will be taken.' There was no lack of volunteers, indeed rather a plethora, going to prove that man is a combative animal by nature; and from the hotel you could hear the thud, thud, of the heavy-booted troopers as they plashed through the mud and mire which held festive sway in Maritzburg streets. The first batch I saw depart for Basutoland a few days before. Jupiter was pluvially inclined, and gave them the benefit of his attentions; and as most of them had no waterproof sheets, and others appeared to be without blankets, I stifled any envious feelings that a combative spirit might suggest within me, and concluded it was, perhaps, better to remain in comfort and inglorious rest than to seek 'the bubble reputation,' even with the attractions of five shillings per day, a bed on the boundless Veld, and a steady rain for a coverlet. I was also somewhat sceptical

Digitized by Google

respecting the exclusiveness of that regulation about 'gentlemen only who could ride and shoot' when I saw the waiter of my Durban hotel troop sergeant-major, and the billiard-marker a lance corporal. They marched out without a cheer—people's enthusiasm doesn't seem to stand wet in Natal; they are getting somewhat *blasé* on Kaffir-shooting scrimmages. There was a great demand for horses, and everybody that owned an old screw or knacker-condemned equine tried in a most patriotic manner to foist the thing he called a horse upon the gallant troopers of Baker at a fabulous premium on its true value. It was a beautiful sight to see the troop mount in response to the word of command; such bucking, jumping, jibbing, rearing, and general disinclination to do what was desired of them was seldom seen by a number of man-carrying quadrupeds outside the charmed circle of sawdust wherein the comic mules of a circus disport themselves.

Bad news from 'the front.' The electric wire told of the destroying power of the electric flash. 'Two men killed and thirteen injured by lightning on the Basuto border.' All volunteers from Griqualand West, members of the Diamond Fields Horse. Thunderstorms are serious matters in South Africa, and deaths by lightning-stroke are not unusual occurrences. During my stay in Maritzburg they were of daily occurrence, accompanied by heavy rains and rolling and rattling peals of thunder of a positively deafening character. While driving out after a storm had subsided one afternoon in company with the district surgeon, we came upon the bodies of a man and his horse killed by a thunderbolt. There they lay, the man on his face and hands, his foot still in the stirrup, and his charger motionless at his side. We turned him over and disclosed a fine open

Digitized by Google

face, in which the livid hue of death had set its seal; the blue lips unclosed, showing the evidently half-formed smile he wore when the Angel of Death smote home; a fine forehead partially bald, surrounded by thick hair, in which a very few streaks of grey began to tell of man's prime being reached; a full beard and moustache added manliness to a face in which honesty and good-humour were equally blended. No wound was visible to tell how his end had come: the slightest singing of the hair upon his chest, a fuse-mark on his watch-case, and on one of the twenty gold sovereigns in his pocket, were the only evidences of the electric current that had beaten out his life, and changed in an instant the strong man into inanimate clay. His position as he lay outstretched, one foot still turned in the stirrup, and his horse at full length beside him, was suggestive of a battle-scene, where a sudden shot had killed steed and man, and would have clearly conveyed this impression but for the absence of visible sign as to how the death had come. 'Twas a sad sight, the horse and his rider in common fate—the human and the animal life stilled by the same blow for ever and for ever.

Maritzburg possesses an exceedingly fine market square, surrounded by large flourishing trees; and here on Saturday mornings the local auctioneers hold high carnival: all sorts of articles, from blood-horses of considerable value down to cast-off uniforms; karosses of splendid skins to Kaffir blankets; diamonds to beads; gold nuggets to brass bangles.

The Government Building, wherein is the Post Office, is the pride of Maritzburg, and a reputable pile it is. Like all African towns, wet weather is inimical to clean thoroughfares; but the surprising way in which the streets dry up again and blow dust a few hours after a heavy rain-

Digitized by Google

fall, would give Macadam the horrors, could he but revisit earth at Maritzburg.

A central figure in Natal politics and modern history must ever be Bishop Colenso, the Zulu-converting and converted prelate, and I took the first opportunity of hearing him—and must confess that disappointment was the result. The cleric who long ago by his confessed scepticism of the Pentateuch threw a bombshell into the midst of Protestant ecclesiasticism, and provoked argument, tirade, denunciation, and even prosecution for heresy, suggested a man of strong will, powerful declamation, and robust physique—seen, and the picture is all the contrary: a gentle voice, monotonous and unimpressive, entire absence of action, apparent shortness of sight, his written discourse being held close to his eyes whilst being delivered, and a timidity of manner rather than a pronouncement of strong convictions; such is a pulpit sketch of this famous divine. Not that his face is devoid of character, but exhibits in repose more firmness than whilst actively engaged in preaching: a tightly-compressed mouth with thin lips; straight nose; lantern jaws, embellished with white whiskers, mutton-chop pattern; rather weak eyes; heavy dark brows; a high forehead, surmounted by long white hair, the latter presenting a marked contrast to the black eyebrows beneath; spectacles of an apparently powerful kind, and which singularly enough he discarded whilst reading his sermon; his pulpit draped in brilliant red cloth, with a motto thereon centrally emblazoned, completing the picture. There is the sadness of thought depicted in his face, and though the language of his discourse was elegant, poetical, and refined, it failed to impress from the want of force in its delivery and suggestive weariness of the speaker. He

Digitized by Google

is a great champion of the native races, and has fought their battle with untiring zeal.

While in Maritzburg I made the acquaintance of Alfred Aylward, and as he was subsequently known as 'Joubert's Irishman,' it may not be out of place to anticipate events in alluding to a personage who has secured a notoriety, and, as far as general colonial opinion is concerned, a not too favourable one. His appearance was that of a stout, full-bearded man, with dark eyes of a not agreeable kind, and a manner full of brusquerie amounting to rudeness, and a dogmatic method of expression that would not be gainsaid. There was an Hibernian devil-may-care rollick about the way he edited his paper; and he was quite equal to the task of working out a leader, or swallowing a stiff tumbler to his favourite toast of 'Death to the Saxon,' whichever was proposed. Various stories of his past career are afloat in Natal, most of which must be accepted with the traditional pinch of salt, and are probably based on mere surmise and rumour; and while in Africa I was often asked to believe that he was none other than James Stephens, the Fenian Head Centre, a man totally his opposite in complexion, colour of hair, and features.

The Governor of Natal at the time I visited Maritzburg was Sir George Pomeroy Colley; and possibly the last public entertainment witnessed by him, was one given by me under his command at the Theatre Royal.

Maritzburg is an oasis in the desert of South Africa's towns; and though I am far from saying that considered from its civic and urban point it is perfection, it is nevertheless a long way ahead of many of its much older established brethren, and has many attractions in the way of comforts for the eye and the body that they do

Digitized by Google

not possess. 'The best of friends must part' is a very trite and generally not very agreeable adage; and in bidding adieu to the capital of Natal I felt inclined to suggest a little firmer cultivation of *bonhomie* amongst its inhabitants, and the putting down the heel upon a certain small cliqueism which appeared to obtain, and which marks its having imported with its settlers one of the worst enemies to agreeable intercourse between members of small communities at home.

Digitized by Google

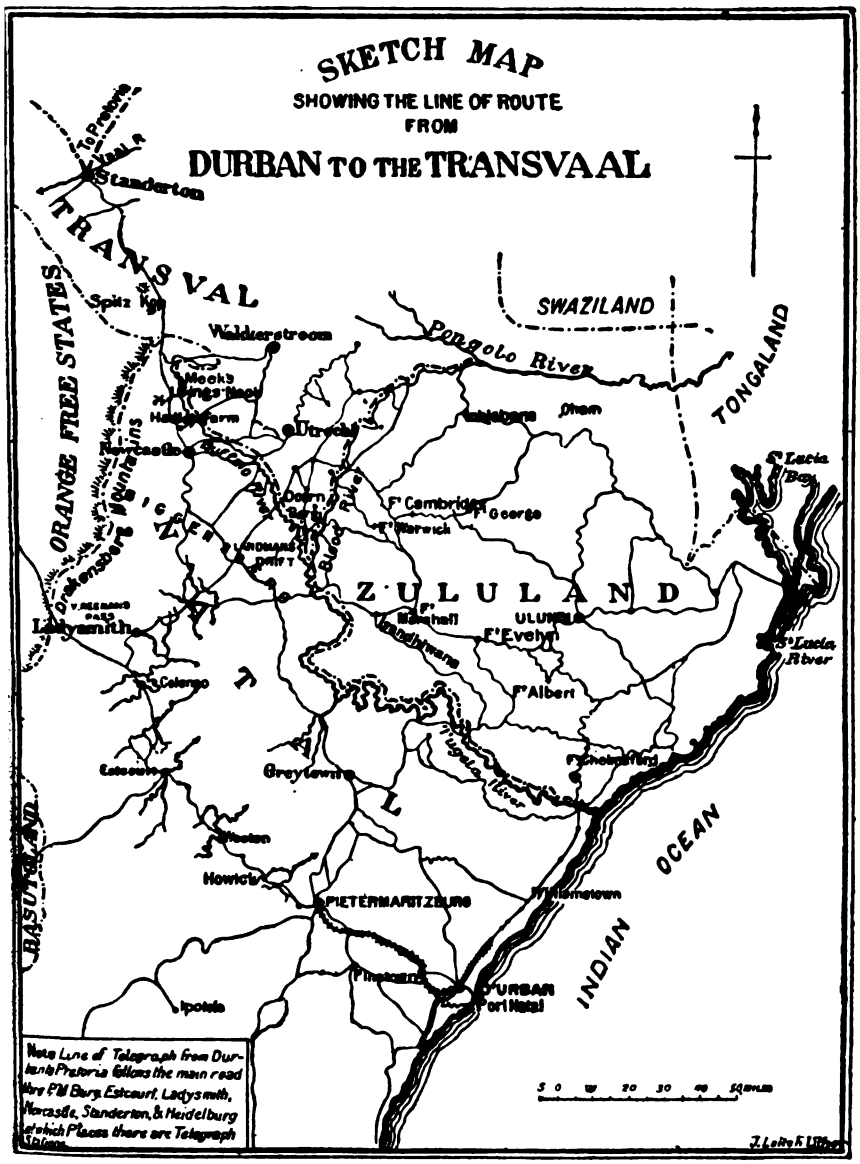
CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE ROAD TO THE TRANSVAAL—A MOONLIGHT RIDE—SOUTH AFRICAN TRAVEL—A PLEASANT LANDLADY—CROSSING THE KLIP RIVER—LADYSMITH—A NIGHT ON THE VELDT—NEWCASTLE.

HAVING sent on my travelling waggon and horses to Howick, sixteen miles from town, I arranged to ride out by moonlight after fulfilling an important engagement at Maritzburg, and to proceed on the journey at following daybreak. Accompanied by Fry, my comrade *en voyage*, we 'saddled up,' and left the capital of Natal at a little past the midnight hour, and duly commenced the ascent of the celebrated Town Hill.

Now there had been a clear month of soaking rain previous to the date of our starting for the Transvaal, and as the Town Hill is a somewhat serious matter, even when the roads are in a comparatively satisfactory condition, it is needless to hint that the traffic of numerous heavy waggons, some having thirty-two bullocks in the span, had not improved it, that the ruts were trenches, and the holes veritable pitfalls. To add to these luxurious points of comfort, clouds sprang up, and continually passing over the moon's disc, threw shadows that were far from conducive to safe or rapid progress even upon the most dependable of beasts. We had not well left the town when we found a fellow-voyager in desperate plight—his cart

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

overturned, his pole in chips, his harness in rags—all the result of an endeavour to induce two strong-minded and anti-hill-climbing mules to drag his vehicle through what they no doubt considered a ploughed field instead of the road usually found there. Recollecting that we could afford no assistance, and that 'fine words butter no parsnips,' we pushed along towards the brow of the hill. Splash! dash! and a man and horse sank apparently into the bowels of the earth, as my comrade's steed made a *faux pas* and got bodily into one of the bottomless pits so liberally distributed on the Town Hill road. The horse, however, was an old stager, having done the State considerable service as a Frontier Light Horseman's charger in the Zulu and Sekukuni campaigns, and after sundry struggles and rolls he emerged on what we will call the bank, for the surroundings of the pool were worthy of the title, and on we went again. Progression under these circumstances was not easy, but patience and perseverance, according to the old saying, will bring a snail to Jerusalem, even though his start be made from its very antipodes, then why not two fairly-mounted travellers from Maritzburg to Howick? When nearing the village, close to a clump of trees whose black shadows were darkened by a passing cloud, we were startled by a dismal groan from the roadside. Rein up, draw revolver, and then approach cautiously. Again the groan, more dismal than before. A thousand horrible thoughts of murder, suicide, or other violent death suggested themselves. A dark object, from whence the sound proceeded, lay on the right-hand side of the road; an indistinguishable mass. Looks like a Kaffir—two Kaffirs—several Kaffirs—poor fellows! fallen off a waggon whilst sleeping. Eh, what! Why, hang me if it isn't an old 'trekk' ox,

Digitized by Google

for whose mighty heart the roads have been too many, and he has handed in his papers with a request to be permitted to leave the service of mankind—his general good-conduct discharge as faithful to the last being countersigned by that incontrovertible authority, King Death.

This is no novel sight. The roads in South Africa are inlaid with skeletons of oxen and horses, upon whose carcases the vultures, or 'Aasvogels,' sit in solemn conclave, and hold high carnival until nothing but the blanched bones are left to whiten in the sun.

Poor old Taurus! we could not even lighten your latest moments by a few bars of that excellent melody which is said to have hastened the end of your milk-producing sister at home, as the moon was sinking, the clouds rapidly spreading. So away we went again, and in a few moments another sound of a more agreeable character was wafted on the air. It was the roar of the descending water of the Umgeni Falls, plunging nearly 400 feet down a precipitous cliff. The murmur, growing louder every moment, told us our ride was over, and our temporary home—the waggon—reached.

We turned in to sleep in the waggon, giving instructions to the drivers to start in two hours' time, which they did; and after about a mile's hard pulling we stuck dead, and no inducements, either of fair promise or foul deed, forage or flagellation, could induce the horses to move. So we buckled to and shouldered the wheels, and after half an hour's moisture-producing exercise we added a couple of hundred yards to the distance already travelled. Another stick, and more exertion, more persuasion; three whip lashes and two

Digitized by Google

sticks *hors de combat*, but combat the horses we could not. However, after ten minutes' interval for rest, and the refreshment afforded by a pool of muddy water, the brutes, having duly considered the matter in the interim, went off on their own account, and, having nobody to check them, cleared the brow of the hill and dashed at a hand-gallop down the valley on the other side, I mentally bid good-bye to my Cape-waggon, as I expected every moment to see it converted into smash ; but no, keeping the centre of the rough road, the six equines dashed along, the vehicle hopping and bumping after them, literally taking the ruts and stones flying. As they reached the rise at the other side a native, who was on the 'trekk,' seized the leaders and brought the team to a standstill, and we returned to the serious work of driving them up the hill ahead of us. It is needless to recapitulate the luxuries of the journey—broken traces, main bar, side swingles in splinters, wheel-horse down, front spring broken, general disarrangement of ideas, marked ditto of amiability of temper, six hours and a half doing ten miles—these are a few of the incidents of the start from Howick for the Transvaal.

It is usual to inculcate into our earliest ideas a respect for that excellent quadruped the horse—in fact, in our children's book we find emblazoned in the largest type the line, 'The horse is a noble animal ;' but when the horse, multiplied by six, and yoked to a Cape-waggon, under a blazing sun, firmly plants twelve fore-feet into a rugged road of ruts ten inches wide and a foot and a half deep, and religiously refuses to draw an ounce, saying, in fact—

> 'You may break, you may shatter, my ribs if you will,
> But in spite of your sjambok, 'tis here I'll stick still.'

Digitized by Google

the effect is damaging to our youthful faith, and we are prone to think that the author of the equine panegyric had limited his experience to more ductile and plastic quadrupeds—with lighter yokes and easier burdens than my South African team. Nothing for it but to submit to circumstances, and the fiat goes forth to cast the harness from their backs, and let them wander forth to procure their sustenance on the boundless 'Veld,' while we seek at the hotel, a quarter of a mile distant, some breakfast, the hour being high noon.

And now a word on Natal roadside hotels. Some writer has said the weary traveller is always sure 'to find his warmest welcome at an inn,' but the poet who penned these lines was as equally strange to Natal roadside inns as his brother who wrote of horses was of South African steeds on heavy roads. It is generally supposed that people who live by public support endeavour to secure that favour by courtesy, attention, and the giving of fair value for fair charges. But when, instead of these things, you meet with positive rudeness, inattention, exceedingly indifferent fare, and equally mediocre accommodation, combined with prices much in advance of really good hotels elsewhere, the worm begins to turn, and exclaiming, 'Why is this thus?' takes to solving the problem presented by Natal roadside hotels and their proprietors, and is eventually compelled to 'give it up.' And now, to substantiate my statement, I will simply quote one of many personal experiences—this one in continuation of the narrative of travel just recounted. We left Howick at 4.30, before daybreak, and by sheer physical exertion of men and horses of an unsparing kind, we had made about ten miles of the journey at 11.45—close on midday. I went up to the hotel near

Digitized by Google

which we were compelled to outspan, and interviewed the head-man in the hope of getting the assistance of half a dozen bullocks or a couple of extra horses to pull the waggon up the hill to the house. A discourteous negative was my answer. Seeing the landlady, and believing that women are, as a rule, more sympathetic than men, I asked could breakfast be prepared for three, as we were utterly exhausted by seven hours' exertion, and a cup of tea would be esteemed a luxury. A peal of most impudent laughter was my reply, and on suggesting consideration for the fact that we were worn out and hungry, I received for answer an inquiry as to whether I thought it likely they were going to make breakfast at that hour, the chorus of laughter coming in as before by way of a climax. I bottled up my wrath, and waited two hours until dinner, which was dear in price, and bad in quality. At the close of this indifferent meal, I brought a couple of bones from my own plate and gave them to a pointer-dog who had followed me from Maritzburg, and who, like ourselves, was suffering from hunger. The hotel landlady, seeing my action, gave the word to a servant to let loose a ferocious bulldog belonging to the establishment, which having been done, she set him on my unoffending animal. I fortunately detected the act, and drew a revolver, and in another instant would have shot the bulldog had not the barman of the place seized him, and taking him up in his arms retreated into the house. These are facts I can readily prove. The hotel was known as "Curries' Post,' and the landlady I refer to, I was informed, rejoiced in the name of Stock; and the conclusion I came to was that it was a stock which had evidently deteriorated by grafting, or the original tree must have been but a rotten branch. This incident is but one of many

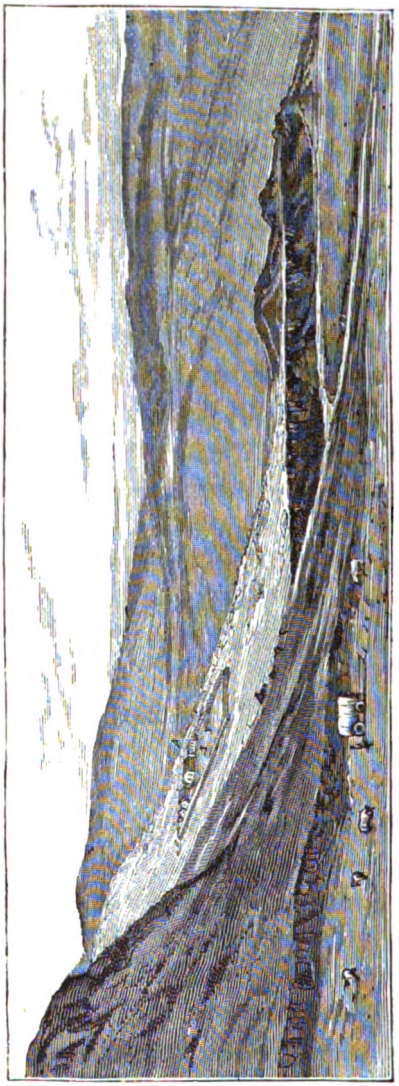
Digitized by Google

I could recount where downright impudence, discourtesy, and over-charges were the only articles upon which you might fairly count to be faithfully supplied with at certain hotels in the land of fair Natal.

Having returned to the waggon, I determined to go back to Maritzburg, and secured the good offices of a transport rider, an old Yorkshireman, very rough and very ready, who lent his bullocks and pulled my waggon up alongside his own, which was being made all safe for the night. The old Yorkshireman got out of his store bread and butter, and having lit the camp fire, we made tea, and had a good meal; just over in time to get under the sail-cover of the bullock waggon and dodge a severe thunderstorm that rattled over us. It was lively while it lasted. Fortunately these storms do not last long —it is just as well, for they are pretty brisk in action whilst they are at it; the lightning is no respecter of persons, and goes around killing, maiming, and destroying in a most impartial manner. The old Yorkshireman, although thirty-two years away from his native heath, retained all his characteristics of rough good-nature, hospitality, and a *patois* of the most emphatic kind. He said, as the vivid electric fireworks lit up the whole surrounding country, and the peals roared overhead, 'It's th' only thing I dunnat keer for this plaace like, is these here thunderstorms; theer tu near to be very pleasunt, aw think;' and we agreed with him, the more so as we discovered next morning a hole in the earth large enough to bury an ox in, where a thunderbolt had driven into the ground, and this not more than twenty yards from where the horses were tied to the pole, or, as the colonials call it, disselboom, of my travelling waggon.

After a stormy night the morning rose brilliant and

Digitized by Google



Estcourt.

Digitized by Google

clear, with scarcely a trace visible of the past rain-storm. The marvellous way in which the earth sucks up the water has more than once astonished and surprised me. Pulling ourselves together, we loaded off two-thirds of the baggage and returned to Maritzburg, from which we made a fresh start, bringing a seventh horse for riding purposes. On the second journey nothing important occurred, and we reached Estcourt without difficulty. A few days' dry weather has a wonderful effect on South African roads. All the tracks which, when previously passed, presented the appearance of gigantic plough furrows, had been ground down by passing bullock teams and mule trains, and the thick, dried mud pulverized to powder.

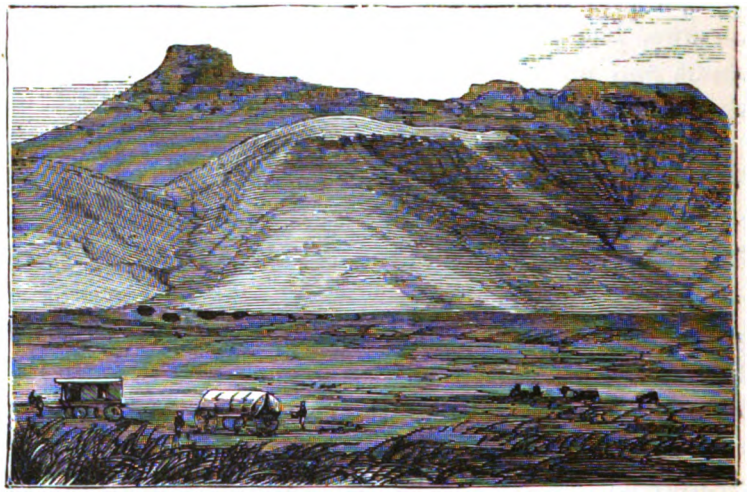
At Estcourt we found a detachment of the Natal Mounted Police, a force in all respects much similar to the Cape Mounted Rifles. They were watching the Basutoland border, where the fighting was beginning to assume unpleasant proportions. During the afternoon we re-crossed the Tugela River, and pushed on for Ladysmith. Night had fallen when we reached the Klip River, on the other side of which is situated Ladysmith; and the stream was pretty high, not having entirely fallen since the previous rains. It is not a very easy or agreeable business in daylight to drive six horses harnessed, two abreast, and pulling a long four-wheeled covered waggon through a South African river, when the drift is uncertain and the water high; but when the shades of night have fallen, it scarcely adds much to the ease or security of the adventure.

On this occasion the horses stuck in the mid-stream, and there was no alternative but for the driver to peel off and go in up to his armpits in water, and whip in hand propel the wheelers, whilst I on horseback tried to

Digitized by Google

draw the leaders to the bank. After sundry futile efforts, resulting in much splashing and profane language, the wretched brutes who held the key of the situation in their hooves consented to go ashore, and we struggled blindly up the bank. The waggon had certainly hitherto borne a charmed life, having run the gauntlet of practical destruction again and again with complete success.

Seventy-five miles' travel from Ladysmith brought us to a new town on the northern border of Natal, and called, from the reputation its neighbourhood has ob-



View near Newcastle.

tained for coal deposits, Newcastle. It is the exact antithesis of the saying, 'It is useless bringing coal to Newcastle,' for here we have brought Newcastle to coal. It is stated on reliable authority that the 'black diamonds' exist in abundance near here, and are to be obtained with comparatively little difficulty.

A Government mining engineer, who has been investigating the district, has reported a coal-seam of excellent quality, and I understand that no known seam

Digitized by Google

can rival the thickness of this lately prospected one. The dead-lock to the working was the want of railway system to transport it, for the bullock waggon cannot convey it to Maritzburg at a less cost than five shillings per cwt., or five pounds per ton, a tariff which of course precludes its successful development as an industry.

Newcastle was a heterogeneous mass of corrugated iron stores, canvas tents, and adobe buildings—about as utterly unsightly a combination as ever received the distinction of being called a town. It had a fort, a lot of military stationed there, two hotels; and if it hadn't malaria then, it ought to have secured it by now, for a place more unsuited for a sanatorium I have never yet seen. The military camp was to break up the next day and move down to Estcourt; and it did. And one subaltern took a 'few things' in the way of baggage with him which managed to fill two large ambulance waggons; and mine enterprising host of one of the hotels persuaded him that he would not be able to get any champagne unless he took it also: so he sold him a few dozen cases, and a cart to carry them in, and Cliquot and Monopole were taken on the march, rather to the discomfiture of the hotel proprietor at Estcourt, who was thus despoiled of his legitimate prey.

If conscience *does* make cowards of us all, as the melancholy prince asserts, how fearful and timorous those Natal hotel proprietors ought to be! They don't seem so—perhaps it is owing to the absence of the primary reason.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHAPTER OF TRANSVAAL TRAVEL—CROSSING THE BUFFALO—A ZULU WAR CELEBRITY—A HORSE HUNT—WAKKERSTROOM—AN OLD COLONIST'S TALE.

BIDDING adieu to Newcastle, the future coal emporium of Natal, as its speculative inhabitants fondly hope, I struck off for Wakkerstroom, the first town I expected to visit in the Transvaal—which, by the way, seems rather a misnomer for territory lying south of the Vaal River. No important incident occurred until we reached the Buffalo River, nine miles from Newcastle, and on the direct road to Utrecht and Wakkerstroom, the former lying to the right.

On sighting the river and what appeared, from the number of tents, to be a camp pitched on the farther bank, I spurred forward to examine the drift, and see what prospect there was of crossing, and the general condition of the river. On reaching the bank at the near side of the drift, I found the water rattling merrily along at about six knots an hour, very discoloured in appearance, and evidently higher than was fordable. On my waggon appearing at the brow of the bank, I called out to the driver to hold still, until I had tried the depth on horseback; but he either heard not, or imperfectly understood my meaning, and in another minute came clattering down the incline, and I had but

Digitized by Google

time to plunge my horses into the river to clear the way, when in came the team of horses and waggon, and with the impetus of the descent managed to drag through about twenty yards of the deepest part of the drift, the horses swimming until they obtained a foothold, their heads alone visible above the rushing water—the white

Inquita Mountains.

hood of the waggon keeping them company. I swam my horse to the leaders' heads, and vainly endeavoured to pull them to the opposite shore, where help appeared in the shape of a lusty-looking white man, accompanied by two Kaffirs. The white man proved no other than an enterprising transport-rider and self-commissioned sutler to the army in Zululand, rejoicing in the *sobriquet*

Digitized by Google

of 'Cock Jones,' and whose extraordinary escape on the occasion of the Intombe disaster, when Captain Moriarty was killed and his company almost destroyed, is one of those things to read about, for they are surely seldom seen.

The Kaffirs brought a long line and tied it to the leading horses' heads, and the occupants of the waggon, having duly stripped off their clothing, took to the water; but all endeavours were futile, and after splashing and struggling until a couple of horses were on the point of drowning, the four leaders were taken out and a span of oxen obtained. A hawser was then attached to the 'disselboom,' or pole, and the bullocks fastened thereto; and rocking and rolling, plunging into holes, and bumping over rocks, the waggon was saved from a watery grave.

When brought to land it was found to contain something like eighteen inches of water, and an auger had to be borrowed, and half a dozen holes pierced through its flooring to permit the muddy liquid to escape; and what a particularly pleasant effect it had produced on everything therein! Dress-baskets and their contents, cartridge-boxes, provision ditto, bags of apparel, all thoroughly soaked, were now stretched on the 'Veld,' to dry as much as possible in the sun, who did not promise a continuance of his presence for long.

Having emptied a quart of water out of each riding-boot, and got a change of clothes, I repaired to the 'camp' of the redoubtable 'Cock Jones,' and a 'camp' I found it. Fourteen army bell-tents and a marquee ditto in the centre, flanked by a couple of bullock-waggons on the one side, and a lately-improvised Kaffir hut on the other, comprised 'The Hotel;' but the 'Old Cock,' as he is reverentially called, is a speculative

Digitized by Google

genius, and proposes to shortly emerge from his present chrysalis condition of canvas, ropes, and pegs, to all the glories of brick, mortar, and wood, and will then dispense the creature-comforts of tinned corned beef, Three Star brandy and 'hop beer' under the substantial roof of his 'new building.' He is well qualified, by appearance, to make a successful Boniface, for a visage more thoroughly seasoned by exposure, maturity, and temperance drinks (?), it might be difficult to meet with for a like purpose. He told me the story of his escape from the Intombe, and flavoured his description with an amount of strong language which might by fastidious people be considered more forcible than polite, but which is somewhat in vogue in South Africa—of how he jumped out of one side of the blank waggon, with no blank clothing but that which is generally put on first and taken off last—how his partner took the other side, and was assegaied at once, —how he hid up to his neck in a mud-hole; and all his 'hair-breadth 'scapes' from the blanked Zulus, and how he'd be blanked if he ever gave 'em another blank chance of the same kind—with several other blanks that the reader can fill at his own pleasure, and to his own taste.

While lying on a couple of skins in the marquee tent, which did duty as shop, canteen, breakfast-parlour and reception-room, an alarm came up from the river, and I ran down to discover the cause. Two gentlemen in an American spider, drawn by four horses, were mid-stream, and struggling to get across. The 'old Cock' had duly warned them not to come down, but disregarding his advice, they had ventured in with anything but satisfactory results. The same experience as mine was repeated, with the exception that the spider turned

Digitized by Google

over a couple of times, and one of the horses, in his struggles to free himself, succeeded in reducing his powers to considerably below par, and was floated ashore in a state of asphyxia. The long line, carried by a sable gentleman, named 'Mooshoose,' and who appeared to belong to the amphibious portion of creation, was fastened to the spider, the rest of the horses cut loose, and the vehicle drawn ashore.

Such was my experience practically, and as an eye-witness, of the pleasure of crossing the Buffalo River, a stream which has obtained historic immortality in connection with the memorable defence of 'Rorke's Drift,' and the deaths of Melvill and Coghill, who fell clambering up its banks, with the colours of the 24th Regiment twined around them.

As the day threatened we 'spanned-in,' and bidding good-bye to 'Cock Jones' and his encampment, we pushed on with a deal of difficulty over an abominable road to Wakkerstroom.

As night and a storm were both approaching, we outspanned our horses and made the waggon up for the night, close to a small farm-house. I did not venture up to the building, as I had heard that the proprietor of the next farm we should meet held such pronouncedly anti-British tendencies that his welcome would be of a decidedly disencouraging kind, so we made the horses fast to the waggon-wheels and turned in—two in the waggon, and two underneath it to sleep. And then the storm called in just in its friendly way, and the rain dropped down to show there was no ill-feeling, and the lightning made matters enlivening, and horses broke loose, and the two men underneath began to sing a duet, "Floating gently down the stream," and things

Digitized by Google

became what might be termed—well, rather disagreeable. Next morning it was found that two horses were missing, having broken their halters and their parole simultaneously. Despatching the driver to hunt them up, I was about to turn in, having sent the other steeds to graze, when I saw a Kaffir gentleman, arrayed in all the glory of a soldier's red coat, quietly driving the balance of my horseflesh over a hill a quarter of a mile away. Having overhauled him and interrogated him as to his intention, I received for answer the words 'Hamba schut,' which my limited knowledge of the Zulu language and Cape Dutch told me meant that he was driving them to 'the Pound,' a receptacle for strayed cattle, which on this occasion would have been at Utrecht—twenty miles away —so I looked upon my luck as providential. And now for the story of a wild horse-chase. The driver returned, after three hours' fruitless search, to say that no trace of the lost steeds could be obtained. While debating the possibilities of whither they had strayed, a soldier of the 94th Regiment, riding on postal service, passed, and intimated that he had seen some Kaffirs driving a herd of oxen and some horses about five miles on the Wakkerstroom road. I saddled up another horse, and went on the track. Accompanied by the soldier, with rifle unslung, and suggestively resting on his hip, I visited numbers of Boers' farms and native kraals, and examined stables and outhouses, with as much authority as if armed with a search-warrant. Seeing a considerable ravine into which it struck me as possible the horses might have run for shelter from the storm during the night, I bid a temporary adieu to my 'orderly,' and rode through the 'kloof,' passing some natural waterfalls and thick clumps of bush. Presently I came upon a large Zulu kraal, and inside the cattle fence were a number of horses, amongst which I fancied

Digitized by Google

I saw my lost ones. As there was a stalwart old party—with little clothing but the ring on his head which indicates matrimony—already in possession, I thought it possible I might find it difficult to assert my ownership. All trouble on that score was soon saved, as nearer inspection showed me my suspicions were incorrect, and that I had culumniated the 'Baas of the kraal' in my mental proposition that he had been indulging in the pleasant little South African pastime called 'horse-jumping.' For seven mortal hours I rode over mountains, through kloofs, crossed rivers, galloped over 'Veld,' wherever my eyes, supplemented by a pair of field-glasses, discovered any four-legged beast resembling a horse, until I came, as night fell, within sight of Wakkerstroom, the white tents of the military camp on the hill beyond shining in the declining sun, and I found I was a distance of at least twenty miles from where my waggon was 'outspanned.'

My fare during the day had consisted of two eggs, a small piece of crusty bread, moistened by as much river-water as could be conveniently drunk while lying face downwards hanging over its bank, so I concluded it was as well to go on and push for the shelter of the Wakkerstroom Hotel, where I duly arrived at sundown, having probably ridden upwards of forty-five or fifty miles in my wild horse-chase.

The proprietor of the hotel proved to be the lessee of the farm where my waggon was left, which said farm-land rejoiced in the pleasingly guttural appellation of 'Fruskavaacht.' Next morning a relief column, consisting of two mules, kindly lent by a Mr. Martinus, one spare and two riding horses, under the direction of the young 'Baas,' Ned, myself, with saddlebags crammed with hunks of beef, scrags of mutton, and loaves of bread, started for Fruskavaacht. Do not, gentle reader,

Digitized by Google

unacquainted with Dutch, attempt the pronunciation of this mysterious word, or the effect upon your vocal chords may be of that irritating character that quarts of horehound will fail to allay.

We found my party fairly comfortable, having crow-barred an entrance into the empty house, slung a hammock at one end, laid down cushions for beds at the other, and having a 'high old time' on a patriarchal cock obtained from a Zulu kraal, and some boiled wheat (the latter had been intended for the horses), hunger making excellent sauce; and the only objection they appeared to entertain to the fare was, that the wheat was somewhat strong in flavour, owing to the paraffin lamps which we carried with us having drained themselves into the bag during the upset in crossing the Buffalo River.

A Dutch Boer brought word of the strayed horses, and they were discovered nine miles away, the Boer asking the modest sum of five shillings for his information, which I need not say was paid with many thanks. A severe thunderstorm and general downpour of heavy rain having set in, kept us water-logged in the no longer empty house at Fruska—but no, I will not run the gauntlet of a reader's imprecation by suggesting its verbal accomplishment.

Next morning we prepared for the 'trekk' to Wakkerstroom—the roads were soaked with the previous night's rain, and a difficulty suggested itself in the want of harness for the extra mules; but necessity is the mother of invention, and the middle pair were soon yoked in with extemporized gear, the materials of which comprised folded mealie bags for breastplates, and strips of ox-hides or 'riems' for traces. And now a word on these invaluable wants of the South African road—the

Digitized by Google

'riems,' without a stock of which no one ought to attempt to travel. Your spring breaks, wet a riem and tie it up, when dry it is as hard as iron; your cross and swingle-bar couplings smash, another 'riem' secures them; your horses get loose from the waggon at night, but not if the 'riem' that halters them is good and well tied; a trace gives way, a 'riem' supplies the deficiency; should you wish to 'larrup' your nigger, you cannot use anything more skin-tingle-producing than a 'riem;' and when the worst has come to the worst, and a desire to end this darksome world of misery and woe forces itself upon the suicidally inclined, nothing you can obtain to hang yourself with will be found more reliable than a 'riem,' provided you moisten the slip-knot satisfactorily.

Thanks to these ox-hide strips, as invaluable in their way in matters of travel in South Africa as the brute beasts from whose skins they are cut, we made a start, and succeeded by dint of considerable labour, and a considerable disrespect for the sensitive feelings of mules or horses, in reaching a point of the road within a couple of pistol-shots of Wakkerstroom, when plump the waggon sank into a mud-hole; and no anathemas, scarifying, or other method of horse-propelling power would induce the team to exert the remnants of their combined physical force, which had been severely tried in the previous three hours. So the bullocks were requisitioned again, and the oxen pulled us out, and driving the horses pellmell ahead of the waggon, we made an ignominious entrance into the town. The race is truly not with the swift, but with the sure, in ploughing your way through the roads when going to the Transvaal.

Wakkerstroom, in the high 'Veld' of the Drakensberg chain, is a small town consisting of some half a dozen stores, one hotel, a magistrate's court, and some ten or

Digitized by Google

twelve other buildings. It stands high, I should fancy it is one of the highest points whereon South Africa's sons have pitched an agglomeration of places of abode, which by name and from courtesy we needs must call a town. A brief interregnum from the hard work of Transvaal travel has been secured, and while stretched on a bed in 'Ned Hazlehurst's,' the 'Baas' of the hotel gave me, in his own honest unvarnished way, a slight sketch of his life and Colonial experiences, and truly a more chequered existence it is not often in the limits of one man's years to tell. Quite a boy he was sent to Greenwich College; but on the way, near Oxford, accompanied by a friend, he left the train, and the pair footed it through North Wales until they arrived near Bangor. The attention of a lady was attracted to these little wanderers, and 'Ned' was taken to her house, and having been duly inducted into a new suit, introduced by her to her brother, a captain of the Holyhead and Kingstown mail packet, and installed as his particular cabin boy. A broken leave in Dublin suggested fresh enterprise, and joining a merchant ship he served for a period with the hard experience of a sailor before the mast. Returning to Liverpool after some years, he presented himself to his father, whose resentment had not cooled in the interim, and who, after giving him what was called in Lancashire 'a good hiding,' bound him for seven years to the merchant service. At the end of his time he entered the navy, and spent another seven years under the British flag, and in his combined nautical experiences he visited almost every part of the navigable globe, and with him shipwreck and disaster were things of almost everyday occurrence. Coasting South Africa he served with the Naval Brigade against the Kaffirs in several of the old Colony wars, and becoming

Digitized by Google

enamoured of Africa's clime, cancelled his connection with the navy, and came 'up country.' After varied experiences of a desultory character, he settled in Maritzburg as a sawyer, and fortune began to smile upon him, his oxen were fruitful and multiplied, his waggons without being the former did the latter, but his apparently strongly marked honesty of purpose made him the prey of designing rascality. Bills accepted by him from the sole desire to assist others were dishonoured and thrown back upon his hands, and under the beam of the sheriff's eye his flock of cattle melted away, and his waggons drew themselves off. Disgusted with the treatment he had received, he determined to go and dwell amongst the Boers and the Kaffirs, and with the wreck of his fortune 'trekked' to the Transvaal, where he worked for five years in the Pongola woods cutting timber, and by dint of indefatigable industry again accumulated a wealth of stock and household goods. He came to Wakkerstroom, which then comprised but one or two tenements, and having stocked a store, traded successfully for some years.

The Diamond Fields were then discovered, and with waggons of goods he passed through the Orange Free State to what was then known as the 'New Rush,' now styled Kimberley. Arrived with his wife and family, he disposed of his stock and waggons, save one which represented house, home, furniture, all their belongings. To economize this waggon as a place of residence it became necessary to spread straw underneath for the Kaffir boys to lie on, while canvas sails attached to the top of the waggon sides and pegged to the ground formed a tent of some capacity. An incautious native, lighting his pipe, set fire to the straw, and in a few moments tent, waggon, household goods, and worse than all, an

Digitized by Google

invalid son, were converted into cinders. Ruin and desolation again stared him in the face. To use his own words and honest, rugged style of narration, 'Why, man, I have been seven times castaway at sea; I have had to live for thirty-two days on a desert island, where our only food was the birds we knocked down, and the fish we sometimes caught; but I never felt my heart sink like it did that day, with my dead son lying all burnt and blacked in my arms.' However, a good angel was at hand, and the owner of a store, probably struck with the honesty of the rough-and-ready 'Ned,' offered him the stock and premises with no other security for payment than that afforded by an innate conviction that all would come right, and he would be no loser by his confidence in his man. 'Ned' worked by day in the claims, and till midnight in the store; and fortune, followed by such implacable perseverance, rewarded the pursuit. And now one of the most singular points of the story has to be told, and one that may suggest the smile of the sceptical, and from others the insinuation that I am drawing upon the region of romance; but I am repeating almost word for word the story as it was told to me, and I have not the slightest doubt as to the truth of the statement. The person from whom he took over the store left him also his claims in the mine to work, on the arrangement of dividing the profits; and this gentleman's wife, on leaving, pointed out a certain lump of blue ground, in which she said he would find a large diamond when he worked down to it. The prognostication proved correct, for in the veritable lump indicated was discovered a stone of over 100 carats, somewhat off-coloured, but still worth a considerable amount. He paid off his debts and liabilities, and feeling the impossibility of resting in the fever of the mining world, decided

Digitized by Google

to sell out and go back. He re-settled in Wakkerstroom; and was recently again in the field as captain of a native contingent serving in the Zulu War; and later still, became mine host of 'The Traveller's Home.' And though his hotel partakes somewhat of his own character in being somewhat 'rough and ready,' I am quite willing to ignore its deficiencies for the sake of the honest proprietor, whose eventful history has afforded me a page of real life from which many a volume of romance might be constructed.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX.

A CHAPTER OF TRANSVAAL TRAVEL—THE SAND SPRUIT—MYSTERIOUS STRANGERS—MORE ACCIDENTS—CROSSING THE VAAL RIVER—STANDERTON—A HAILSTORM—AN EPISODE—CHASED BY ZULU CONSTABLES—ARRIVAL AT PRETORIA.

RUMOURS were noised about at Wakkerstroom of a great mass-meeting of Boers to be held on the coming 8th of January, and at which their leaders were to declare the policy of the future, to be followed by immediate action if their wishes were not acceded to by the British Government. These reports were supported by a point-blank refusal of a number of farmers to pay taxes to any but their own elected governing body, a statement they published in their organ, a Pretorian journal, *De Volkstem*, a newspaper holding strong anti-British opinions. As straws denote how the wind blows, I endeavoured to test public feeling from conversations with people I met, and I well remember how emphatic mine host, Ned Hazlehurst, gave it as his opinion that the Boers meant fighting, if their wishes were further ignored.

'You really think they will?' I said.

'By the heaven above us, I do think it!' he replied; and added, 'Why, man, they're making "biltong" at all the farms in the country—that's good enough for me!'

Digitized by Google

I have often thought since there were worse and certainly falser prophets than 'Ned,' with whom I stayed for two days amongst the hills; and then, having purchased the two mules, previously so kindly lent, our 'span' permanently increased to eight animals, and a spare riding-horse for myself, we ploughed our way through the bog which crosses the 'Vlei' road leading from the town to the Vaal River drift at Standerton.

We had volunteer guides on horseback in front, and a pilot on the box, who professed the ability to successfully steer a waggon through the sea of mud, bog, and slush, comprised in the 'Vlei,' stretching a couple of miles on the outward path. We said good-bye to our pilot and guides on passable *terra firma* and proceeded along a couple of miles of the track, the vehicle sliding about on the soppy path somewhat mysteriously; but presently the right wheels got into a water-furrow, and before the team could be pulled up, the waggon went completely over down the side of a small sluit. Fortunately it was not very deep, but, as Mercutio says of his wound, 'it is not as deep as a well, or as wide as a church porch, but 'tis enough'—and enough we found it, especially to get out of. To add to our misery, a thunderstorm was momentarily expected, and by the time we had off-loaded everything from the capsized waggon, and partially sheltered the articles with canvas sails, it duly put in an appearance, accompanied by torrents of rain. A good-natured transport-rider, whose ox-waggon was near by, lent a hand, and, amid flashes of lightning, peals of thunder, and plashing rain, we set to work to dig down the bank to a level, which, after about two hours' spade-exercise, we accomplished. Then chains to the wheels and oxen to

Digitized by Google

the rescue, and up came the coach to its perpendicular, the chain just breaking in the nick of time, or the bullocks in their enthusiasm would have pulled it over on the other side.

Storm over, a lovely evening, general repairs, and camping for the night formed the conclusion of our day's travel, having accomplished the stupendous distance of four miles. Fresh start in the morning and further progress, with continual delays of broken harness, sticks in mud-holes, and other enjoyable and good-temper-producing novelties, and we arrived at 'Meeks'—a place which, with the mountain-dip just behind us on the left, 'Laing's Nek,' was destined subsequently to secure a notch in Transvaal history.

Meeks was simply a roadside store, with a little river brawling beneath it, from which we got water and prepared our matutinal repast. By evening we reached a little tributary rivulet known as the Sand Spruit—a term usually applied to small watercourses running to river-beds. But 'spruit' as it was, we found about six feet of water in the drift, the depth of which a tall Kaffir was sounding, and occasionally entirely disappearing beneath the stream in the process. So, seeing the futility of attempting to cross, we 'outspanned' alongside a military ambulance and a mule waggon, whose occupants were evidently in similar plight to ourselves, and constrained to wait for the now rushing river to dwindle to its ordinary proportions.

Travellers are credited with the experience of meeting strange bed-fellows. This may or may not be the case; but it must be conceded that those who roam abroad chance upon singular roadside acquaintances. Our

Digitized by Google

neighbours for the night, the occupants of the ambulance-waggon, consisted of a tall, thin, military-looking man, wearing a blue navy serge suit, and a stout, full-chested lad, apparently about seventeen years of age, whose grey clothes fitted him somewhat clumsily, and whose turned-down straw-hat seemed more intended to cover his full head of hair than shield his very fair face from Afric's fiery sunshine. Seeing the boy sitting on the back of the ambulance, I began a conversation in an encouraging tone, concluding that his experiences of 'roughing it' must be new. His reply, or rather the voice in which it was spoken, acted upon my ears like an electric battery, and a very short supplemental survey with my eyes satisfied me that the boy (?) was none other than a girl—and one who had probably attained a more than feminine majority. Well, I thought, as I walked back to acquaint my comrades of the road with my discovery, I did not expect to realize modern Constances and Marmions while 'trekking' through Boerland; and reflecting on the rushing rivers we had left behind, and which lay before us, I murmured the words of one usually accredited as the wisest of men, though matrimonially a little loose, wherein he says: 'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.'

About the mid-day following I forded the drift on horseback, and the party with the waggon essayed to cross. One of the leading horses 'fooled' at the water, got the team entangled, and the waggon up on the bank, and over it went again, being more or less top-heavy from having its contents raised to escape damage by water. Fry, who was holding the reins, seemed to disappear as the waggon fell over, and I thought he was crushed under it in the water; and I rode back in hot

Digitized by Google

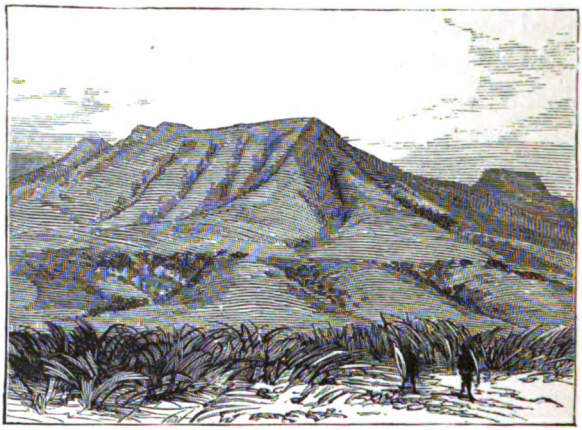
haste, shouting to some transport riders 'outspanned' near the bank, for assistance. He, however, had retired inside the vehicle when he felt it going over, and presently emerged from a chaos of boxes, parcels, rugs, etc., which, piled up in the back, had temporarily buried the ubiquitous one in the upset.

Singularly enough, on both these occasions the vehicle suffered little or no injury, and the same tactics as before were observed—the bank being dug down level, and this time the horses pulled the waggon on to its wheels. We loaded again, and obtained the services of some bullocks to take us through, having become 'skeery' of our fetlocked quadrupeds, in whom our faith had been so rudely shaken. After an hour's run, and two more wasted at a small spruit where the horses again stuck, we made a moonlight 'trek' to an iron-plated hotel, where we put up for the night, and were considerably interested the next morning by the lamentations of a traveller, two of whose horses had been ejected from the stable the night before, to make room for my 'mokes,' and were now ranked amongst the 'missing.' The Kaffir groom, in the beauty of his innocent heart, and the muddle of his 'Cape-smoked' head, thought the nags belonged to his master, and the 'Veld' was consequently considered good enough for them, he holding it wise that the stranger's horses as well as himself should be taken in.

During next day's 'trekk' we remarked a high table-topped mountain lying far to the left behind us. Little I thought as I drew attention to the sugar-loaf peak the setting sun was illuminating with a ruddy crimsoned glow, that a deeper dye, the blood of many a soldier's heart, would at no distant date bathe the slopes of that mountain, which afterwards I knew as Amajuba Hill.

Digitized by Google

With several minor mishaps and continual delays from the horses 'sticking,' the team having now become thoroughly demoralized, as night was closing in we sighted Standerton and a galaxy of carts, waggons, etc., which were 'outspanned' on the banks of the Vaal River, their owners gazing with longing eyes at the bank beyond. In less than half an hour we drew up alongside our acquaintances of the Sand Spruit, the ambulance with its red cross denoting their whereabouts,



Drakensberg Mountains, with Amajuba in the distance.

and a mild curiosity on our parts to again see 'Constance' in a forty-shilling tweed suit, suggesting their vicinity as an agreeable place to camp.

A scene of cheerful confusion was presented on visiting the drift. Some half-dozen white and an equal number of black individuals were all tugging at a giant chain which spanned the stream, and attached to which a four-wheeled post-cart buoyed by empty barrels was being frantically hauled across. Tug and strain at it they went until the floating vehicle was about mid-stream, when snap went the chain, leaving half the Christian

Digitized by Google

and all the Kaffir muscularity sprawling on the bank, and away went the post-cart gaily circling round and round, as it careered away amid the rush of many waters. A number of intending passengers had been brought over in a small punt, and they gazed with somewhat woeful visages at their baggage on the banks, and their conveyance sailing 'to the western seas;' and, of course, the inevitable thunderstorm came on and helped to make their return across still more agreeable, and successfully blotted out the moon which hitherto had helped to add interest to the scene.

We pitched a tent, and 'Grab' successfully crossed the river in a punt and returned loaded with bundles of forage for the horses, and a roast leg of mutton, some beans, rice, bread, etc., for the bipeds quite a gorgeous supper, which we demolished with an appetite whetted by a hard day's travel, and the fresh breeze of the rolling 'high Veld.'

The river having fallen during the night, about ten o'clock next morning, drawn by a long span of twenty-four bullocks, kindly lent, and led on horseback by their owner, a gentleman just returned from a six months' hunting tour in Zululand, we crossed the Vaal, and at one time, while in the middle of the stream, a capsize appeared so imminent that I mentally bid farewell to my waggon and its contents, and a providential forward movement of the oxen alone righted its equilibrium, and sent it splashing out on the other side.

Whilst at Standerton, a very new and equally small place, we enjoyed one of the fiercest storms I ever want to witness. It was a hurricane of rain and hail, the stones of the latter as large as pigeons' eggs, and accompanied by lightning and thunder of the most vivid and resonant character. The roof of a canteen adjoining the

Digitized by Google

hotel was lifted bodily to a distance of fifty yards away, and strewed its fragments of wood, mortar, and fluted iron in a most playful manner about the market-square. The sluits became rivers, the noise of the hail upon the iron roofs was like the roar of Niagara, and had there been a glazier in the vicinity, he would have mingled his tears of sympathy with the downpouring element as he viewed the wreck of what had been windows a few minutes before. Standerton was really a nice place to reside in while I was there, for the Vaal River called in on some of the inhabitants and saved many the trouble of removing their furniture by floating it out first and carrying it away afterwards. This, however, is an abnormal condition of the stream, which usually comports itself with passable decency, and is content to slumber in a much narrower bed.

Leaving Standerton and our principal troubles behind us, we journeyed on satisfactorily enough, becoming thunder-proof, as storms were now of daily occurrence, to the pretty little town of Heidelberg, where a good hotel and a better landlord—a Scotsman of the Graham clan—made our stay agreeable and comfortable.

A notable incident worth recording, as it may prove a warning to travellers, occurred in Heidelberg in connection with the straightening of a couple of iron plates, attached to the waggon-pole, or 'disselboom,' as the Dutch call it. At Wakkerstroom I had four iron plates put on the base of the pole where it enters the V or tree of the waggon (you are continually requiring repairs to vehicles when travelling in South Africa), for which I paid the sum of £1. A couple of these plates, owing to severe straining, had got slightly bent, so I sent the pole to the local waggon-maker to have them straightened. He straightened them, and returned the pole with a bill

Digitized by Google

for 18s. 6d., being but 1s. 6d. less than the entire original cost of the making and putting on of the four plates. I took the advice of some local people, who all agreed that it was an absurd attempt to overcharge. So I resolutely disputed the amount, and tendered 7s. 6d., which was as resolutely refused. The next morning, before leaving, I again offered the smith the lesser amount, which he again refused; so we drove away, the waggon-maker breathing threats of the deepest and direst character—in fact his last remarks were, 'Well, you won't go far!' the meaning of which observation I had yet to learn. By the law in the Transvaal, as I afterwards discovered, a sworn statement made to the magistrate would enable him to detain any passing debtor, who it could be proved was *peregrina*, and intending to leave the district. Innocent of this, we rattled away, towing the spare horse behind the waggon, and at the close of a long day stopped at Gatonby's—better known as Ferguson's—some thirty-six miles from the town we had left. It was a night of thunderstorm, and we were glad to get the shelter of the hotel, wherein we found mine host surrounded by trophies of the chase; for he had been a mighty hunter, and buffalo heads, gnu or wildebeeste horns, elephants' tusks, and the skins of lions from the Zambesi, met the eye wherever you chanced to cast your gaze; and pulse-exciting were the stories he could and did tell of the pleasures of trusting to your rifle for your dinner, and the accuracy of your aim for your morning chop or steak. We rose at five o'clock, and on going over to the store found a party of half a dozen Zulu police, fully armed with assegaies, knobkerries, etc., and bearing those brilliant links which seem determined to defeat the adjuration not to let thy right hand know what thy left doeth, and which are best known as

Digitized by Google

'darbies' by the occupants of her Majesty's hospitals for the cure of kleptomania. I heard them talking in Zulu to the man of the store, and he freely translating what they said to a number of Dutch-Boers and other hangers-on.

'Vot does he say?' Grab ventured to observe to the storekeeper's clerk.

'Some prisoners broke gaol last night,' said he in reply; 'and they are also looking for three white men in a waggon with a horse tied behind.'

Hearing this, I looked at those Zulu constables with some interest, and reflected that it was somewhat fortunate that I had ridden in ahead of my waggon the night before, and not driven up with my horse tied behind, which would have too strikingly tallied with the description of my Zulu sleuth-hound, who must have been but a few hours behind us, although travelling afoot all the distance. Visions of going back manacled to Heidelberg with prods of assegaies and bruises from knobkerries all over my body began to haunt me; and I went to the stable, and told Fry to saddle up the most reliable of the horses, and take him quietly up to the house, where I would meet him. I then went back and professed to greatly wonder, and audibly expressed my surprise as to who the party could be that was 'wanted.' Seeing the horse led out, I reiterated my wonder and surprise, mounted, and putting the spurs fairly home, cantered away on the road to the Transvaal capital, resolving that I would not draw rein until within the district of Pretoria, the Alsatia wherein I might consider myself safe; and bearing this resolve in mind, my first 'off-saddle' was at a point called the 'Six-mile Spruit,' inside the magical boundary line. There I drew breath, and waited the

Digitized by Google

arrival of the waggon, which in due course put in an appearance; and after breakfast I again saddled up, having fairly succeeded in my first, and it is to be hoped last, experience of 'outrunning the constable.' An hour's ride brought me into a mountain-defile, or 'poort,' and on debouching from its entrance I caught my first view of Pretoria; and as the white tents of its military camp, and the blue gum and waving willow trees of the town came in sight, I registered a solemn mental reservation, that should fate direct my steps again through the 'high Veld,' I would select a season of the year when the drought was pre-eminent, just to mark the contrast in the various 'sloughs of despond' I had struggled through in my recent experiences of Transvaal travelling.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXI.

PRETORIA—A WORD OR TWO ON THE TRANSVAAL—FIRST INTERVIEW WITH SIR OWEN LANYON—BOER SCARES—A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING—DEFENSIVE ORGANIZATIONS AND DYNAMITE—D'ARCY'S HORSE—RUMOURS OF WARS—'WITH THE SHOW' AT THE CAMP—ENTR'ACTE INTELLIGENCE—PIQUET DUTY—MY FIRST PATROL.

On the 18th November, 1880, after twenty-seven days chiefly consumed in the most difficult, and I may add dangerous travel, we reached Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, and seat of the British Administration, then presided over by Sir W. Owen Lanyon.

At the time of my arrival in its capital, the Transvaal was, through a number of fortuitous circumstances and the judicious advertising of land speculators, attracting considerable attention amongst intending emigrants, principally from Ireland; and having undertaken a series of papers on South Africa for the columns of a leading Dublin journal, I felt more exclusively interested in it than the previous portions of the country I had visited. The result of my inquiries and personal observation it may not be out of place to reproduce, as a hint to anyone contemplating a removal to brighter skies than those which shed lack-lustre over the countries of the Thames, the Clyde, and the Liffey.

At the time of my visit, a number of self-constituted land companies appeared to be doing a profitable business, through their European agents, with the possessors of

Digitized by Google

small capitals, who, lured by the glowing descriptions of the farms announced for sale, negotiated their purchases at home, and on their arrival in Pretoria found that their magnificent estates existed either in portions of the country where malaria and fever had taken up a permanent residence and held prior claims, or in the imagination of intelligent individuals who prepared the bogus plans and title-deeds, on the faith of which they 'cashed up.' In one office I saw a Transvaal 'Guide,' with map attached, on the obverse side of which was printed, in magniloquent language, the tempting bait of 'Farms free of rent for ever at three shillings an acre and upwards, on easy terms to the purchaser.' The letter-press of this work—I had almost said of fiction—and which appeared to have been published more in the interest of the land agency it advertised than as a paying speculation on its literary merits, depicted the Transvaal as a 'land flowing with milk and honey,' and not as it really was, and probably will long remain, a very sparsely-populated, generally uncultivated, and in parts, notably the northern districts, somewhat unhealthy tract of country.

In this 'Guide,' but scarcely 'philosopher and friend,' the manifold resources of the land, both in mineral wealth and farming capacity, were held up with such ingenuity that the picture of rural felicity, comfort, and prospective wealth might well have dazzled the eyes of the hard-worked farmer at home, and made him an easy prey to the devices of unscrupulous speculators. But the opposite side of the painting was carefully concealed. The gold-mines were spoken of as second only to those of Australia, which galvanized a continent into life; the coal was in seams to put Lancashire to the blush; iron and copper were to be had for the mere asking; but the facts

Digitized by Google

were quietly ignored that the amount which had been found was infinitesimal, that prospectors had failed time after time, that there was no possibility of using the coal for want of railroad transport to reduce its carriage to a payable level (a rule which equally applied to other minerals), and that stock-farming was subject to the severest losses by epidemics and diseases peculiar to the land, and with which it was found impossible to successfully grapple.

Amongst these complaints are 'lung sickness' and 'red water' in cattle, 'geel-ziekte' in sheep, 'horse sickness' amongst equines (a deadly disease which obtains in almost all portions of the Transvaal, the 'high Veld' excepted), and last and not least in size, though not less dangerous in quality, the 'Tsetse fly,' a little insect occupying the great belt of country skirting the western, northern, and eastern borders, and whose bite, but a trifling annoyance to man, is a death-warrant to stock of all kinds.

And then, looming upon the horizon of 'the land flowing with milk and honey' (see 'Guide'), there was the stalwart form of the Dutch Boer, who had as little affection for the British immigrant as he had for the British Government, regarding the former as an interloper, the latter as a usurper.

The first Dutch settlers, too, helped themselves liberally to all the best land in the country, their ideas of enough for one being at least 3,000 morgen, or more than 6,000 English acres. As more than one allotment of this quantity fell to the share of individuals, some Boers were absolute proprietors of tracts of territory extending almost as far as the eye could reach; and though possibly they tilled and farmed, in the English acceptation of the term, but a few acres for immediate

Digitized by Google

use, they held on with extreme tenacity to their stake in the country, and emulated the advice of the eminent Irish agitator by keeping 'a firm grip on the land.'

To reach this 'milk-and-honey' country from Natal, Durban being its nearest seaport, a pilgrimage such as I had just completed was necessary, over 500 miles of mere tracks, crossing numerous rivers where bridges were unknown, and in cases of wet weather suffering hardships and delay to which the worst European travel was comfort itself; and to such as were inclined to tempt fate by coming to try their fortune as settlers in the Transvaal, I felt a strong desire to ask them to weigh well the possibilities of success before being 'off with the old love' in order to be 'on with the new.'

But though many disadvantages there undoubtedly were for small-moneyed emigrants, the more so when induced to purchase their farms through agents at home, there appeared no absolute reason why the Transvaal should not, under fairly favourable conditions, become quite as successful as other portions of South Africa.

Large and splendid reaches of country there undoutedly were, especially in the 'high Veld' districts between Wakkerstroom and Heidelberg, all coated a brilliant green by the firm, strong grasses of the hillsides and slopes; and as far as grazing-land was concerned, nothing could wear a fairer aspect than the 'Veld' far and near around Pretoria—farms in the vicinity of which were evidently much more valuable than elsewhere. This grass in winter becomes, owing to the influences of sun and drought, nothing but coarse dry hay which cattle cannot live upon; consequently it is necessary to 'trek' with the stock for some months to other pasturages in the 'bush Veld,' where the herbage retains its sweetness and freshness. 'Veld'

Digitized by Google

fires are resorted to by the Boers to clear off the old withered grass, a practice considered detrimental to the soil, though it must be admitted an easy and thorough system of clearing.

I found the Transvaal Boer a discontented and somewhat objectionable individual: he had his grievances, and he grumbled accordingly. His fathers left the Cape Colony to escape from British sway, and planted their flag in Natal, where his rule had but a short lease of life when Great Britain stepped in; and once more the Dutchman 'trekked' to fresh fields, and crossing the Vaal River, established the South African Republic, receiving at the time a guarantee that the pursuit was ended, and he would be interfered with no more. But the promises of governments are not always sacred; they are but the words of mortal men. The Boer's moment of trial arrived, and it is an indisputable fact that when the annexation by England took place, the powers that then were in the Transvaal were not in a flourishing condition—anarchy and poverty went hand in hand—the former in the governing body, the latter in its Treasury; and so her Majesty's Special Commissioner called in, and with words of honeyed accent in his proclamation, quietly attached the Republic to the British Crown. Many promises of a rose-coloured character were embodied in the clauses of the annexation programme, one of which reads as follows: 'And I further proclaim and make known that the Transvaal will remain a separate government, with its own laws and legislation, and that it is the wish of her Most Gracious Majesty that it shall enjoy the fullest legislative privilege compatible with the circumstances of the country and the intelligence of the people;' and I was glad to read that little condition relative to the intelli-

Digitized by Google

gence of the people, which helped to explain the fact of there being no really representative form of government in the Transvaal, Boer intelligence having evidently been weighed in the British balance, and found wanting. The system of legislature consisted of an administrator and a council, comprising the Government officials and a number of nominee representatives appointed by the Crown, which latter the Boers looked upon as what they really were, the mere automaton echoes of governmental opinion.

The British storekeepers and others of their kind who had been attracted to Pretoria did not seem to embracingly rush at their Dutch brother, but regarded him as about one degree better than a Kaffir, and denounced him as lazy, ignorant, and cruel. Prejudice, however, helped to engender these extreme opinions, and the antagonism the Boer felt to individual Englishmen from the actions of the Government fostered these feelings; but in judging the early settlers of this tract 500 miles from everywhere, it is but just to remember they have been industriously leaving the influence of communities behind them ever since their forefathers planted the Dutch flag on the shores of Table Bay, a fact which never seemed to strike many newly-imported Englishmen, who apparently expected the refinements of home on the confines of civilization.

The Boer has many points to recommend him, and his proverbial hospitality has been warped by the antagonism he feels against what he considers the injustice he has suffered. There is no doubt he will bear considerable improvement; he has no elements of progress lying dormant which can be easily quickened to action, and as a farmer he is, from our point of view, a sloven, and wholly apathetic. 'The fewness of his

Digitized by Google

wants,' as an eminent politician has ably said, constitute 'the riches of his possessions;' and when you have filled his flesh-pots with the stew of the 'schaap' (sheep), his pipe with Boer tobacco, and poured him out a decoction he is pleased to call coffee, and which is to be had all day long, and night too probably, in a Transvaal farmhouse, you have crowned his happiness in the present; and, if he *can* read, his library consists of a well-thumbed copy of 'de Bijbel' (Bible), to the contents of which he is devoted, and no doubt he is equally satisfied as to his happiness in the future.

There is a point of etiquette that you must not omit on each and every occasion you meet him and his, and that is the sacred duty of shaking hands. It is a somewhat monotonous performance, and on visiting a farm where the family is extensive, becomes rather fatiguing, as every member of the household expects this mark of courtesy to be religiously observed, from the 'Baas' and the 'Vrouw,' down to the little two-year-old toddling about the floor, and whose palm may not be improved by the attractive particles of a well-moistened piece of sugar-cane upon which he or she is refecting. Nevertheless, this is a duty owing to Boer society, and its non-observance may be construed to mean all sorts of things inimical to a proper understanding, and the reciprocity of a perfect *entente cordiale.*

The Boer is pious, and keeps his religious duties with strict observance; his creed is that of Calvin, and outside its lines he steadfastly refuses to look; but he is quite unobtrusive in his sentiments, and his bigotry, if he has any, he is satisfied to keep to himself—and it is not of an implacable character, as fairly instanced in the following story, founded, I believe, on actual facts:

Digitized by Google

A Roman Catholic bishop, celebrated for his wit and readiness, as well as his exceptional learning, and whose acquaintance I had the privilege of making in Port Elizabeth, was travelling 'up country' with a two-wheeled Cape-cart, accompanied only by his driver, a 'Cape boy.' Overtaken by night, some miles from their destination, they drew rein near the house of a Dutch Boer, and the 'boy' went up to ask a night's shelter for his master. The 'Baas' inquired as to who his master was, and the 'boy' replied :

'A Predekant' (clergyman).

'What kind of Predekant ?' said Mynheer.

'Roman Catholic,' replied the Cape juvenile.

'Ow !" said Mynheer, 'de duivel is dar!' (the devil is there), and refused point-blank to allow the bishop to enter his domicile.

His lordship was a man of considerable resource, and with the aid of a flute, which he played fairly well, and a traveller's flask of brandy, settled himself inside his cart and began to waken the surrounding 'Veld' to the strains of 'Vat you goed and trekk Ferreira,' a melody which has been termed the South African National Anthem, and which is the most familiar air in the country.

Orpheus and his lute was as nothing to the bishop and his flute, for half a dozen bars had hardly been played when the head of the old 'Baas' was seen protruding from the door, presently followed by his body, his sternness of countenance gradually relaxing as he sidled towards the cart from whence the sounds proceeded.

The 'Vrouw,' with a 'kleina Kind' (little child) in her arms, debouched on the front 'stoep,' whilst other members of the household began to peer from different

Digitized by Google

coigns of vantage, until quite a charmed circle, including the Hottentot servants and the Kaffir dogs, listened with greedy ears whilst the episcopal flute went on toot-tooting in an unconcerned manner, and to all intents unaware of the local sensation it was creating.

The ice having thus been broken, it required only the application of the flask of brandy to create a complete thaw, and a proffered 'soupje' was at once accepted; and in half an hour his lordship was installed as Mynheer's guest for the night, the best things of the larder at his service, and the best room in the house for his dormitory—in spite of his host's preconceived opinion that the body of a Catholic bishop was the fixed abode of the king of fallen angels.

This is a fairly illustrative anecdote of some of the characteristics of the Dutch Boer, who is a curious mixture of simplicity and shrewdness, though I think the former is predominant, and has made him a mark for the wily 'smouse' or pedlar, who still in a minor degree glories in the successful manner in which he is able to best the 'Mynheers' in the matter of buying and selling, swap and barter, profit and loss.

Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal and seat of Government, built on an extensive area, is well-watered and planted—the blue gum and willow trees, as is usual in South African towns, predominating in its arboriculture. The hedgerows are chiefly composed of briars, and in summer-time blaze with myriads of roses; and there are few residences of any pretensions without having an orchard of fruit trees, where peaches, pomegranates, apricots and grape-vines luxuriate in all profusion, with here and there a banana, or Arabian palm, peeping out, as evidence of a proximity to the tropics. Some large natural springs, a couple of miles from town, called

Digitized by Google

'The Fountains,' give a constant supply of water to the rivulets that run parallel on each side of the streets intersecting the town, which is well laid and open. The streets I found far from perfect specimens of macadamization; footpaths were unknown, and the pathways, very pretty in the day-time with their rippling water gurgling along, were extremely unpleasant on dark wet nights, as town-lighting was one of the arrangements yet to come. However, even these little drawbacks have their bright side, as the dropping into two or three sluits on the way home had the effect of often restoring sobriety to an intoxicated brain, and the skipping over the furrows formed an invigorating exercise.

Canteens and lawyers appeared to have attained a state of plethora in Pretoria—not that I would suggest that there is any necessary connection between the two—but it is nevertheless an indisputable fact that both seemed to flourish successfully up to the date of my arrival; and I am not too sure that the tide of success had begun to ebb with the men of law, though it certainly had with the vendors of intoxicants. This sad decadence was brought about by the gradual diminution of the number of Imperial troops stationed in Pretoria, and by the departure of Commandant Ferreira and the Transvaal horse for Basutoland, which noble army of martyrs embodied all the canteen-haunting 'dead beats' of the town to the number of some 300 consumers. Since that unhappy day the interior of the canteens had realised a proper definition of emptiness, and the visages of the proprietors had elongated to a positive danger of derangement of the lower jaw.

Business generally was dull—over-speculation, the reaction after the Zulu War, Boer discontent, and other stagnating influences were at work, and the inhabitants

Digitized by Google

were mentally praying that a railway be commenced to go to Delagoa Bay, or Timbuctoo, or anywhere—Delagoa Bay preferred—or that a big gold-rush would develop itself, or even a Boer war break out, or equally stirring event, to give an impetus to trade and assist in clearing out accumulated stock. Building was going on rapidly, but the public edifices of the town were entirely insignificant, and the place, owing to so much land for gardens being allotted to each residence, spread over quite a considerable area of ground, and suggested a much larger population as probable dwellers within its radius.

Having telegraphed from Wakkerstroom my inability to be up to date at Pretoria, I found my 'special wire' displayed in the columns of the *Transvaal Argus* in bold and prominent type, as follows :

LATEST TELEGRAMS.

Bad Weather? Bad Roads?? Bad Luck???

TWO HORSES LOST, AND OTHER CASUALTIES.

WAKKERSTROOM, NOV. 6, 1880.

CHARLES DUVAL, Wakkerstroom, } *to* { AGENT, Pretoria.

Stuck three hours out; two horses lost. Hold back, or postpone advertisements; will be a week behind.

My 'agent' was a friend, a townsman of my own, whose acquaintance I had made at the Diamond Fields, who *con amore* was acting for me at Pretoria, and whose 'bold advertisement' easily explained to the

Digitized by Google

Pretorians the reason of my non-arrival — so they appeared quite willing to forgive my want of punctuality. Here let me add that in no part of Southern Africa previously visited had I met more agreeable and pleasant people, whether as private individuals in their domestic realms, or as public auditors to whom it was my privilege to introduce 'the show'—a general expression of opinion which, with the exception of a few individuals, I had no subsequent reason to modify.

A few days after my arrival I waited upon the Administrator, his Excellency Sir W. Owen Lanyon, who favoured me with an interview, during which he kindly discussed the Boer and other political questions. 'Sir Owen,' as he was familiarly called, a tall, dark man of unexceptionably gentlemanlike manners, held the opinion, the universal one apparently amongst persons in Transvaal authority, that the Boers would not fight; and even supposing they did, that a bloodless victory would result on the advance of the Imperial troops.

'But, your Excellency,' I ventured to contend, 'they have been the pioneers of South Africa, and may be said to have fought their way from the shores of Table Bay to the Zambesi.'

'Yes, yes,' he replied, 'I grant you that; but they had only Kaffirs to deal with. They will never stand against the red-coats.'

'Well, your Excellency,' I said, 'as far as I could learn Boer sentiments on my way here, they don't seem to think very much of the foot-soldier, or "rooi baatje," as they call him, for they say he cannot ride and he cannot shoot, in both of which points they themselves excel.'

'They may say what they like, they won't stand against the red-coats,' replied Sir Owen; 'and they have

Digitized by Google

held these mass meetings before, and nothing has come of them; further, our Financial Secretary's present return of collected taxes is far more satisfactory than any previous one.'

With Sir Owen's words, 'They will never stand against the red-coats,' echoing in my ears, a sentiment which, as I have said, was shared universally by all military and civil authorities, I bowed myself out of Government House, and walked down to the European Hotel just in time to learn that my friends of the Sand Spruit and Vaal River, the Marmion and Constance of real life, had arrived there, and the keen eye of mine host having penetrated the disguise of the fair one, he had notified that a change of residence or apparel would oblige, a hint immediately acted upon by the acceptance of the former alternative.

The 'rumours of wars' were the talk of the dinner-table, and a general disposition to despise the possible enemy seemed to be in vogue. The mass meeting of the Boers, originally intended to have been held on the 8th of January, was suddenly summoned for the 8th of December, to determine their attitude respecting a seizure of a bullock-waggon made by the sheriff at Potcheffstroom, in consequence of the refusal of its owner, one Bezuidenhout, to pay taxes claimed by the Government, which seizure had resulted in a forcible rescue of the distrained vehicle on the part of the anti-taxation sympathisers. Curiously enough, history repeated itself here in a most remarkable manner, for the refractory Bezuidenhout was a descendant of the Dutchman similarly named, who, by a refusal to pay taxes in the Cape Colony in 1815, succeeded in raising a revolt which ended disastrously for the insurrectionists, several of whom expiated their attempt by the

Digitized by Google

hangman's rope at Slaghter's Nek, leaving the legacy of their unhappy fate to rankle in the memories of the Boer colonists even to the present time. Two companies of the 21st Royal Scots Fusiliers, under Lieutenant-Colonel Winsloe, part of a battery of Artillery and a couple of guns, had been despatched to Potcheffstroom to the support of Major Clarke, the Civil Commissioner, and Commandant Raaff, the sheriff, the latter a colonial man of considerable local reputation as a leader of irregular mounted volunteers; and it was considered in Pretoria that ample means to vindicate the sheriff's authority had been taken. Meantime the ringleaders of the waggon rescue Cronjè—Bezuidenhout, and some others, had been demanded—and the Colonial Secretary, Mr. George Hudson, was despatched to the mass meeting of the Boers at a place called Paardekraal, to exchange *pourparlers* with the leaders, Paul Kruger, Pretorius, and P. J. Joubert—the acknowledged heads and mouth-pieces of the Dutch population of the Transvaal. In this waggon-travelling country it takes time to gather news, so information as to what was really transpiring was limited; and in the enjoyment of a fools' paradise, the Pretorians went about their various businesses, and only credited such news as they desired to believe, negativing disagreeable intelligence by the contemptuous expression of 'yarns.' I attended a meeting of the Legislative Council, and heard one member, who certainly appeared possessed of foresight, as well as sufficient honesty to feel and courage to express his opinions, denouncing in no measured terms the system of Government and the line of policy it had adopted; and though by no means friendly to the Boers as adversaries of British rule, he evidently held pronounced opinions as to the desirability of granting

Digitized by Google

representative Institutions, and the carrying out of the other promises made by Sir Theophilus Shepstone in his annexation proclamation.

Mr. C. K. White, the nominee member for Pretoria, was the representative I thus heard bearding the lions of executive wisdom in their den, and having thrown down his gage of war and defiance, boldly pitted himself against the array before him, all antagonistic, and seemed to have made a successful case against his adversaries; and if local enthusiasm might be taken as a criterion, he evidently carried with him the sympathies of the Pretorians, British or Dutch. The strong point of defence against the establishment of elective representative government appeared to be an opinion of the Executive that the Dutch population being in immensely numerical superiority would return members pledged to vote for the annulling of the annexation, a difficulty which required some solution, and was no doubt a rock ahead when any proposition of the kind came before the Administration. This may or may not have been the cause, but an evident supineness and want of energy to grapple with the difficulties of the past, present, and immediate future, did strike the unprejudiced onlooker as a notable characteristic of the Transvaal Executive Council; and the debate, historically its last, I witnessed in the High Court of Pretoria did not tend to strengthen a reverence for governing bodies in general, or Transvaal ones in particular. There is always a bright side to everything, and the would-be electors forming the auditors, and who, despite the 'Silence! silence!' of the ushers, contributed spontaneous applause to Senator White, as he metaphorically delivered his left-handers on the legislative proboscis, assembled shortly afterwards in the bar of the principal

Digitized by Google

hotel, and forgot the sorrows of their unfranchised condition in the flowing bowl of soda-and-brandy at two shillings a glass, a price which made Boniface a considerable object of envy to those obliged to rest satisfied with smaller profits and slower returns.

A couple of days before the date of the anticipated great Boer gathering, a meeting was called in one of the hotel rooms to consider the question of forming volunteer companies and other matters relating to the defence of the town; and the proceedings were enlivened by a number of detonations like the discharges of cannon, but which proved to be dynamite explosions, the engineers being engaged in erecting some small forts on the range of hills to the south of the town, and commanding the military camp. As a notice had been sent round of the probability of these sounds being heard, the public generally experienced no alarm; but there were numerous instances of persons who were not aware of the sappers' intentions, and who, having retired early to bed, were disturbed out of their first sleep, and rushing to their doors and into their gardens in their nocturnal habiliments to inquire the meaning of the unusual noises, presented rather remarkable contrasts in ghost-like garments to their more fashionable apparel when 'doing the band promenade' at the camp.

The volunteer meeting resulted in the nucleus of a few troops and companies being formed, a mounted corps, 'The Pretoria Carabineers,' of whom I shall often subsequently have to speak, being raised under the leadership of Mr. R. H. K. D'Arcy, a former magistrate of Kimberley, and a jolly good fellow withal. The possession of something to ride was a necessity to enable volunteers to join 'D'Arcy's Horse,' as they were familiarly called; and having seven brutes 'eating their

Digitized by Google

heads off' in the stable, for the sake of example to others, and feeling it a duty I owed to my countrymen in the possible hour of danger to take their part, I joined the 'Carabineers,' Fry and 'Grab' also coming forward to enrol themselves. The prevailing idea that the Boers would not fight rendered volunteering, especially in the case of the foot corps, rather farcical; and I saw one enthusiastic officer engaged three successive afternoons drilling his 'company,' consisting of from six to ten men, but never reaching the round number of a dozen. 'Pooh! pooh!' said the knowing ones; 'don't tell us; we know all about it. Didn't they hold five mass meetings before? and what came of it? Nothing but loud talk and general denunciation of the existing Government. Pooh! we've had our experiences of this kind of thing before, and you don't catch us going out to pig in tents and do night patrols in a hurry again;' and the fable of the 'Shepherd Boy and the Wolf' had yet to be enacted in Pretoria. However, D'Arcy's Horse paraded some forty or fifty strong, and executed a little skirmishing drill and other simple evolutions to the evident satisfaction of Sir Owen Lanyon, the Administrator, Colonel Bellairs, C.B., and Lieutenant-Colonel Gildea, of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. Upon the shoulders of the latter, as Commandant of the Garrison, devolved the duties of arranging the defence of Pretoria, and the commanding of the volunteers was conferred upon Captain Tew, an officer of the Scots Fusiliers, a position he subsequently resigned.

On the 14th December news began to reach Pretoria of a more serious character, and on the following day a meeting, convened by the Mayor of Pretoria, Mr. J. C. Preller, was held in the High Court, at which a number of well-intentioned gentlemen were desirous of being

Digitized by Google

allowed to form a deputation to parley with the Boers at the gathering now in full swing at the Paardekraal. But the Jingo element howled down these more sober-minded politicians, and with visions of confiscated farms and cattle loot before their eyes, frantically yelled for guns and bayonets, martial law, and hempen necklaces. A section—I am thankful to be able to record, a very small section—of these doughty champions mooted the possibility of forming a 'Free-shot' corps for the purpose of looting cattle and farms; and one of these individuals, afterwards conspicuous by his absence from the front when fighting did take place, solicited my services, adding by way of climax to the attractions of his programme, 'I know lots of Boer farms where there's plenty of stamps;' the latter term being a delicate way of classifying coins of the realm, those glittering medallion portraits of our Sovereign Lady which seem to possess a fascination for all men in all times and climes. I thanked him, and gravely assured him I would think his suggestions over, and felt a considerable reaction setting in, much more favourable to the malcontent Boer than I had previously experienced; not that I was without a natural sympathy for the weak when rising against the strong, for I could not shut my eyes to the fact that there were reasons to account for the train of discontent which had now reached a point of the line where the red light of the danger-signal shed its lurid rays right across the track. And singularly enough, as though in sympathy with the generally warlike sentiments of the Pretorians, or portentous of coming events, shortly after the 'renegades' meeting,' as some of the hotter spirits termed it, was held, the sky assumed a most threatening appearance—louring clouds, deeply dyed in crimson and red, spread over the entire heavens, and so marked and extra-

Digitized by Google

ordinary was this appearance, that I drew the attention of several friends to it as an ominous sign that warfare and bloodshed were at hand.

The following day was one historically interesting to the Dutch of South Africa, as it was the anniversary of the defeat of Dingaan, the great Zulu King, by the old 'Voortrekkers;' and the air was laden with disquieting rumours, and a cordon of mounted picquets kept watch around Pretoria from the sunset of its evening till the sunrise of the following morning. The mounted infantry—an improvised arm of the service—guarded the west and northern approaches, whilst D'Arcy's Horse did similar service on the east and southern sides of the town, at distances varying from a mile to a mile and a half from its centre. This was my first experience on outpost duty, and it afforded fine opportunities for an active brain to work out its varied fancies while riding alone and solitary between the points where the mounted outposts of the nearest picquets exchanged challenges and subsequent salutations; and the grey morning light was more than acceptable to eyeballs strained with peering through the darkness of the long night which seemed as though it would never come to an end. A long weary night. The daybreak was truly a relief to a monotony only broken by the 'grand rounds,' who in order to test our vigilance on one occasion tried to ride past without replying to the usual challenge, and narrowly escaped an ounce of lead as a reward for their temerity. No news is good news, is an old saying, and nothing of importance having come in during the day, I determined to accept an invitation from Lieutenant-Colonel Gildea and his garrison officers to present 'the show' at the camp *pro bono* Tommy Atkins *et hoc genus omnes.*

A large reading-room was duly prepared, and 700

Digitized by Google

people crowded into it; and the soldiers laughed and applauded, with vigorous lungs and brawny hands—happy Jacks, caring little, and probably thinking less, of the ring of guards, armed to the teeth, extended around camp and town in anticipation of a possible night attack.

At the conclusion of part number one, Colonel Gildea received a private message, and the *entr'acte* found him 'behind the scenes;' and in a few brief words he explained his reasons for leaving before the conclusion of the entertainment. His explanation was short, but it was pithy, for he said in a subdued voice:

'There is war! the Dutch flag was hoisted yesterday and the Republic proclaimed at Heidelberg.'

'Do you think they will attack Pretoria, Colonel?' I asked.

'No; but we will go for them,' he replied; adding, 'It is possible that we shall march at two o'clock in the morning.'

They did *not* march at two o'clock in the morning, and rumour in Pretoria had it that a somewhat stormy scene had taken place at Government House, in which diversity of opinion in military circles exhibited itself strongly on the question of what ought or ought not to be done.

The next day, 18th December, the last mail-cart arrived; the post-bags were seized by the Boers at Heidelberg, but the passengers, an Irishman named Clarke and his two daughters, intending settlers in the Transvaal, were allowed to go through unmolested. One of these young girls, with great readiness and courage, had managed to secrete the despatches for the Administrator in the bosom of her dress, and thus carried them safely to Pretoria, though her modesty suggested their being transferred to her hat before her arrival at

Digitized by Google

Government House; and when the facts of how the last governmental despatches were brought to the Transvaal capital come to be known, perhaps Miss Clarke will receive the meed of praise her fidelity and bravery deserve. The story of these travellers was simple. Heidelberg was occupied by the Boers in force, was being fortified, the Republic was declared; but it awakened the people of Pretoria to the gravity of the situation, and horse and foot volunteers began to enrol with some semblance of organization and system. Defensive works progressed, stores were converted into temporary fortifications, loopholed and barricaded, private houses and public offices shared the same fate, and an earthwork was rapidly projected around the old Dutch church, in the centre of the market square. You went to consult your attorney and had to pilot your way through a labyrinth of sand-bags, and enjoyed your consultations with the pleasant play of the breezes sweeping through the loopholes of the office wall. It was Sunday, but going to church was out of the question; not but there was a large enough congregation assembled to justify a ten-parson-power exhortation, for upwards of 250 natives, clad in all sorts of indescribable garments, were at work with pick and shovel throwing up an earthen wall round the Dutch conventicle, and with the Engineers 'bossing' them up, rapidly converting the house of prayer into the service of that fallen angel to whose machinations are attributed all the evils of this world—and war, I take it, may be included in the categcry. On they came—the Kaffirs, not the Boers—bearing bricks, barrels, sand-bags, boxes, etc., and minute by minute the wall rose, the barrier became stronger; and the old Dutch church in the centre looked quietly down at the preparations made to convert its parishioners to a more

Digitized by Google

generous appreciation of the blessings of civilization as purveyed by the mitrailleuse and Martini Henry. Everyone who had been served with arms and ammunition was notified to sleep with his rifle by his side, and his bandolier of cartridges around him. The authorities were compelled to exercise the wisdom of discretion in the giving out of weapons of defence, as so many of the inhabitants were connected in some way with the outside Boers that they were allies only in name, and their loyalty was simply secured by fears for the success of their relatives and friends.

About this time Government closed a half-hearted prosecution of the editor of *De Volkstem* for publishing the anti-taxpaying protest of the Transvaal Boers, and having secured a conviction, condemned the prisoner to one month's imprisonment—a farcical sentence, totally inadequate if really guilty of the serious offence charged of printing a seditious libel, and totally unjust if innocent. I had the pleasure of knowing the editor referred to, and his bitterest foes invariably admitted his consistency, courage, and the unvarying manner in which he had declared against anything but peaceable agitation. Many a time I made him laugh and his black eyes twinkle by asking at his office-door for 'The bloodthirsty editor of the Transvaal Firebrand!' and little 'J. F. Celliers' (or Cilgee, as the name is Transvaally pronounced) was personally a most popular individual, though politically an implacable enemy, who nailed his colours to the mast and clung to his programme with the utmost tenacity. I believe I am not disclosing confidences when I repeat his opinion, more than once privately expressed, that the carrying out of even a moiety of the promises put forward in the annexation proclamation would have prevented the imminent consequences of war

Digitized by Google

and its attendant evils, at this time presenting themselves at every turning and street of Pretoria, where defensive preliminaries of men, guns, ammunition, loopholes, sand-bags, and other military paraphernalia met the eye.

The same day that the last mail-car arrived (the 18th December), from which date our communications might be said to be entirely cut off, the mounted volunteers were notified to parade at our usual ground—the open space opposite Jellalabad Villas—the name of a Government office—at seven in the evening. The 'Carabineers' mustered pretty strong at the trysting place, and drawn up in line were severally asked if they wished to go on special service at one o'clock in the morning or not? I think I am correct in saying that there was scarcely a negative answer, and receiving our instructions to be fully armed, and by one o'clock in the morning to assemble at Fort Royal—a small bastion in the open ground, commanding the 'poort' or entrance to Pretoria from the Potcheffstroom Road—we were dismissed. Each man turned in, clothed, armed, booted and spurred, to catch a few hours' sleep, and towards one o'clock received a cautious awakening, and saddling up as best we could in the dark, repaired to the appointed rendezvous. On reaching the ground at the right of Fort Royal, the shadowy forms of the Mounted Infantry and 'Carabineers' already arrived were visible, drawn up in line, and the occasional jingling of a scabbard or riding about of a knot of officers a little in front alone denoted that any movement was anticipated. After the preliminaries were settled amongst the officers in command the reconnaissance commenced, the videttes and advanced guard being formed by 'Carabineers,' followed by Lieutenant-Colonel Gildea and staff, with the Mounted Infantry as reserve. The night was pitchy in darkness, and being

Digitized by Google

thrown out as a flanking scout at a couple of hundred yards to the left of the column was a situation I found of anything but an enviable kind—an opinion which will be better understood and appreciated when the formation of the country is explained: consisting of mountain ridge, kopjes, stones, large, small, and shingly; holes bored by ant-bears, and dangerous to a degree where untrained horses are concerned; sudden dips in the ground, equally sudden rises; and the only illumination to light the way a few blear-eyed stars, which sometimes frantically struggled through the mantle of dark cloud in which they were generally smothered.

On we went, and the reality of war and its consequences had ample time to secure a hold on the mind; and with the senses drawn to a tension through the impossibility of seeing anything around beyond a radius of a dozen yards, the imagination began to transform everything, whether bush, or stone, or tree, into an enemy's scout. Many a time and oft I gripped my carbine-stock all the faster, my breath held, and the bandolier sought wherein lay the friendly cartridge, whose aid would be called into play in the event of any of my suppositions proving at last correct.

Having been detached with four others as a special patrol, we severed from the column and moved off to the left, and shortly heard the sound of horses approaching. The riders were challenged, but gave no reply; and slipping the brass tubes of death into the breeches of our Martinis, we stood ready to fire the moment the word was given, each man covering as well as he could the direction from whence the sounds appeared to come. A second challenge evoked an unintelligible reply, and a third, with the emphatic statement that further refusal to stand would be followed by an order to fire, halted

Digitized by Google

the party, who proved to be members of our own corps, who had been upon a scouting expedition. Their reticence to reply and disposition to advance, despite all challenges, might have cost them dearly, the more so when dealing with untrained soldiers on their first patrol.

After this episode we rode after the column, and found a picquet of the 94th Mounted Infantry occupying a deserted house near a small river. Oh, glorious stream! All the teetotal lectures combined; all that Good Templar has ever preached; all that the *Alliance* has ever published in praise of the virtues of water, was nothing to the appreciation of our parched palates when we dismounted from our steeds, and lying at full length on the banks of the 'Spruit,' sucked in a full and unstinted draught of the pure, cold liquid rippling pleasantly along.

On rejoining our comrades a forward move was made, and while reconnoitring a 'laager,' where we had received intelligence of the enemy having been seen, our advanced guard came suddenly upon a party of Boers patrolling the neighbourhood. Whiz! whish! and a couple of bullets passed harmlessly over our heads; and Colonel Gildea, riding forward, secured one of the party just as he was in the act of raising his rifle to fire, his friends clearing off as fast as their chargers could carry them.

The Colonel stuck to his man, and when we came to view our prize by the light of day, a singular-looking object he was.

He certainly did not impress you as much calculated to strike terror by his martial air, for with the exception of an uncommonly good rifle, he had nothing military or soldier-like about him.

Digitized by Google

A poor, miserable-looking expression of face, calf-like in its simplicity, and a figure spare even to leanness, were his chief physical characteristics. But if physically he failed to give you the idea of a soldier, how much more did he in apparel! Shade of Murat! whose gallant trappings and flying hussar-jacket were seen to the fore when the light horsemen of the 'Old Guard' charged over many a well-fought field in the glorious days of Bonaparte, had you but gazed upon the first of the enemy's dragoons who fell into our hands on this auspicious morning near Pretoria, you surely would have accorded him the palm for simplicity of uniform! Can I trust myself to describe his gorgeous trappings and apparel? I will, but gently, and not let your eyes, O reader, in imagination be blinded by the splendour it shall be mine to describe. His head, surmounted by what is known as a Dopper hat—namely, a black cloth steeple-crowned edifice, with a brim not less than seven inches deep and turned up with green—commenced him; some kind of dark mixture coat with side-pockets, constituted his middle; while a pair of corduroy breeches and black-leather knickerbockers, the latter fastened with the approved iron spring, finished him. No, not finished him, for I have forgotten perhaps the most striking feature in the entire *tout ensemble*—his 'goggles,' for that, and no other term that I am acquainted with so accurately describes the extraordinary pair of spectacles worn by this Nimrod of the Transvaal. Placing him between two 'Carabineers' at the head of the column, we marched triumphantly back to camp, our prisoner, who looked as though he anticipated immediate execution, being duly paraded in front; and as the white tents of the military shone out against the background of the Magaliesberg range, the conclusion was generally come to that the

Digitized by Google

capture of even this eccentric-looking and valuable prize went but a short distance in the matter of repayment for so many hours' loss of sleep and expenditure of physical exertion. In fact, some of the younger and consequently more irreverent 'Carabineers' were heard to mutter, 'Well, it's hard lines spending the whole night in taking a blind Boer, and we suppose we shouldn't have got him if he could have seen his way out of it.' 'Boys will be boys,' says the adage; and 'Old men will be talking,' says Shakespeare; and although I cannot see how either of these propositions affects my narrative, I suppose they will come in useful enough to enable me to bring to a conclusion somehow the experiences of my first patrol.

END OF VOL. I.

BILLING AND SONS, PRINTERS AND ELECTROTYPERS, GUILDFORD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google